Regulating Emotions – young children's views on what adults can do.

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Declaration

University of East London School of Psychology

Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

I declare that while registered as a research degree student at UEL, I have not been a registered or enrolled student for another award of this university or of any other academic or professional institution. I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

I declare that my research required ethical approval from the University Ethics Committee (UREC) and confirmation of approval is embedded within the thesis.

This thesis is the result of my own work and investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references in the text. A full reference list is appended.

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Abstract

The purpose of this exploratory study was to understand the emotion regulation experience of young children, aged three to four, attending a nursery school of a Local Authority. This study aimed to reveal young children's perspectives on emotion regulation and in particular on the way the children see adults playing a part in the children's emotion regulation. It also aimed to explore ways of engaging young children and eliciting their views.

A sample size of 6 participants together with a qualitative triangulated data collection method, offered by the Mosaic approach, revealed unique insights into children's lived experiences. The data was analysed using a thematic analysis approach.

Findings showed that young children view adults playing an important role in supporting their emotion regulation and that there are a number of ways children found adults can do that successfully. Findings also showed that adults can sometimes be seen as unhelpful by the children, particularly when they were misinterpreting the child's emotions. Other children were seen as helpful in supporting the emotion regulation of fictional characters or children's own. Occasionally children also reported dealing with emotions on their own. All methods of data collection generated interesting data but some were more prevalent in generating the key themes around the adults' role. The thesis offers a critical review of the strengths and limitations of this research together with potential directions for future research. It concludes with implications for the profession and researchers' reflections on the study.

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I dedicate this to my daughter, Freya, whose unconditional love inspired me and kept me going.

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Abbreviations

BPS – British Psychological Society

DBS – Disclosure and Barring Service

DfE – Department for Education

DoH – Department of Health

EBSCO Information Services – Elton B. Stephens Company

ELG – Early Learning Goal

EP – Educational Psychologist

EPS – Educational Psychology Service

ERIC – Educational Research Information Clearinghouse

ETHOS – E-Theses Online Service

EYFS – Early Years Foundation Stage

JSTOR – Journal Storage

LA – Local Authority

PHE – Public Health England

SEL – Social and Emotional Learning

SEN – Special Educational Needs

SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disability

ToM – Theory of Mind

UEL – University of East London

UK – United Kingdom

UNCR – The United Nations Conventions of the Rights of the Child

US – United States

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The importance of emotion regulation

> To the extent that children understand and control emotions successfully, they have greater opportunity to attend to, assimilate, and process events around the world around them, thus enhancing both social and academic competence (Leerkes, Paradise, O'Brien, Calkins & Lange, 2008, p.108).

Research also links the ability to regulate effectively one's emotions to many aspects of well-being and adjustment (Hourigan, Goodman & Southam-Gerow, 2011). In the field of neuropsychology, emotion regulation difficulties - in particular individual and developmental differences in emotional responses - are linked with various psychopathologies (Hajcack, MacNamara & Olvet, 2010). In trying to explain the heightened research interest in the field of development and emotion regulation, Thompson (2011), quotes "a growing awareness that emotional competence is important to social competence, psychological well-being, cognitive functioning, moral sensitivity" (Thompson, 2011, p. 275). Bjorklund, Ackerman, LeFevre and Mondloch (2011) add that research around emotion has made an important contribution to general understanding of both typical and atypical development and the cross over between the two (Bjorklund, Ackerman, LeFevre & Mondloch, 2011, p.138)

The systematic literature review, discussed at length in the next chapter, revealed two special editions of UK published academic journals dedicated to emotion regulation research and its relevance to child development: the March / April 2004 edition of Child Development and the October 2011 edition of the Journal of Experimental Child Psychology.

As demonstrated by the research literature reviewed, emotion regulation is linked with social competence and academic performance (Leerkes, et al., 2008; Spinrad et al., 2006; Valiente et al., 2011), with school readiness

(Eisenberg, Valiente & Eggum, 2010b), with externalising and internalising behaviours (Bowie, 2010) and with children's ability to adapt or not to their social environment (Eisenberg, Spinrad & Eggum, 2010a)

1.2 Local, national and international context

Links between emotional skills and pupil wellbeing, mental health and attainment have been made explicit through government advice from both Department for Education (DfE) and Public Health England (PHE). DfE (2014) states that schools and early years settings have an important part to play in supporting children to be resilient and mentally healthy. Schools also need to ensure the views and wishes of children and their parents are always considered. Furthermore, Weare (2015), in her advice for schools and framework document, states that:

> Mental health and well-being depends on having a sense of self-efficacy and control, and pupils need to feel they have influence and 'voice'. Pupil voice is about genuine consultation and the authentic involvement of all students in appropriate decision making about their own learning and classroom and school life. (Weare, 2015,p.7)

At school children make friends and are influenced by a range of adult role models. Whole school programmes and initiatives that are deemed to promote positive mental health are linked with emotional literacy and emotional intelligence and recognise the role adults play in shaping identity, interpersonal relationships and transferable social and emotional skills (DfE, 2014; Weare, 2011).

Some of the key UK government advice (DfE, 2014; PHE, 2014) around emotional skills and link with mental health and pupil achievement is informed by US research. In their meta-analysis of 213 school based universal social and emotional learning (SEL) programmes, Durlak, Weissberg, Dymicki, Taylor and Schellinger (2011) conclude that "policy makers, educators, and the public" can embed evidence from the SEL programmes into everyday education for tangible

improvements on the healthy development of children and young people (Durlak et al., 2011, p.405).

PHE (2014) also establishes a link between emotional skills and pupil's wellbeing and attainment:

> Emotions can support or impede pupils' learning, their academic engagement, work ethic, commitment, and ultimate, school success (…). Social and emotional competencies have been found to be a more significant determinant of academic attainment that IQ. (PHE, 2014, p.6)

The 2016 Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Profile Handbook (DfE, 2016), the statutory framework that sets the standards for development, learning and care for children from birth to five, names '*personal, social and emotional development*' as a prime area of learning for all children (p.24). The EYFS further names 17 early learning goals (ELGs) that all children should achieve by the end of the academic year in which they turn five. Three of these are in relation to the area of personal, social and emotional development: self-confidence and self-awareness, managing feelings and behaviour and making relationships (See Appendix 1). The EYFS handbook (DfE, 2016) also stipulates:

> Pupils must have access to a rich learning environment where opportunities and conditions allow them to flourish in all aspects of their development (…). Integral to this is an ethos which: respects each pupil as an individual; values pupils' efforts, interests and purposes as instrumental to successful learning. When practitioners are evaluating the effectiveness of their assessment processes they should consider (…) the importance of high quality adult interaction which is sensitive and adaptive to the needs of individual pupils and capable of promoting learning (DfE, 2016, p. 8 - 9).

In terms of some of the current national legislative context, Section 19 (a) of the Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities and providers of services to take into account the views of children. Furthermore, Section 5(1)

of the new Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice 2015 (DfE, 2015) states that:

> All children are entitled to an education that enables them to (…) become confident young children with a growing ability to communicate their own views and ready to make the transition into compulsory education (DfE, 2015, p.79)

The research undertaken aimed at giving children a voice and identifying themes around unmet needs and the contexts which shaped and affected those needs (Huston, 2001).

Children have been recognised as a group that historically has been vulnerable to violation of human rights. International legislation conferring additional legal protection was therefore necessary (Swadener & Polakow, 2011). A key statement in relation to children's rights, The United Nations Conventions of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) states that:

> State Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child (…). The child shall have the right of freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through other media of the child's choice. (Article 12.1, Article13.1, UNCR, 1989, p.5)

The later release of United Nations General Comment No. 7, Implementing Child Rights in early Childhood, in 2005, brings a special emphasis on the rights of young children and extends the original UNCRC, (1989). One of the general principles and rights in early childhood education, in General Comment No. 7, emphasises that young children should be regarded as competent and active participants in all decisions affecting their rights. Young children are also seen as active participants in research and it recommends they should be consulted with respect to policies development. General Comment No. 7 recognises that

young children make choices and communicate their feelings, ideas and wishes in many other ways before they are able to use the medium of spoken language. It further states that:

> To achieve the right of participation requires adults to adopt a child-centred attitude, listening to young children and respecting their dignity and their individual points of view. It also requires adults to show patience and creativity by adapting their expectations to a young child's interests, level of understanding and preferred ways of communication (UNCRC, 2005, p.7)

The Local Authority in which this study took place had a number of core service priorities, some of which related to the need for schools and other educational settings to promote the emotional and overall wellbeing of all children and young people. Personal communication with several early years practitioners and team managers revealed a perceived need for early years settings to better understand the emotional needs of the children in their care. Also, echoed in conversations, was a perceived need for settings to provide activities that reflected the child rather than the adult responsible for their care and learning.

1.3. Conceptual framework: emotional development and towards a working definition of emotion regulation

1.3.1 What is emotion regulation?

Emotion regulation is a complex concept that accounts for many aspects of child development (Bowie, 2010; Bridges, Denham & Ganiban, 2004; Cole, Martin and Dennis, 2004; Eisenberg et al., 2010; Leerkes, et al., 2008). However, the literature lacks clarity around its definition (Adrian, Zeman & Veits, 2011; Bridges et al., 2004; Cole et al., 2004; Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2004; Eisenberg et al., 2010a; Thompson, 1994). Many definitions of emotion regulation refer to it as a set of processes both intrinsic and extrinsic to the individual and aimed at keeping the emotional arousal within an individual's capacity to cope (Bowie, 2010; Eisenberg et al., 2010a; Keenan & Evans, 2009; Thompson, 1991). Emotion regulation thus involves both voluntary and effortful management of emotions as well as soothing and comforting provided by verbal

and non-verbal interactions with others (Keenan & Evans, 2009). Koole, Van Dillen and Sheppes (2011) point out the dual function of emotion regulation: decreasing the intensity of an emotional response (down-regulation) and another aimed at increasing or maintaining the intensity of an emotional response (up-regulation). Grolnick, McMenamy and Kurowski (1999) also include two aspects when explaining the concept of emotional self- regulation: (a) emotional management, whereby emotional arousal can be modulated appropriately; and (b) emotional integration, whereby emotions are assimilated and utilised. They went on to further clarify that:

> (…) The goal of emotional self-regulation is not to simply inhibit emotion, but to flexibly modulate the expression and containment of emotional arousal and to adaptively use the information provided by one's emotional arousal. (Grolnick et al., 1999, p.6)

Cole et al. (2004) proposed the following working definition for emotion regulation:

> Emotion regulation refers to changes associated with activated emotions. These include changes in the emotion itself, such as intensity and duration, or in other psychological processes, such as memory or social interaction. Emotion regulation is not defined by which emotions are activated but by systematic changes associated with activated emotions (…).The term emotion regulation can denote two types of regulatory phenomena: emotion as regulating and emotion as regulated. (Cole et al., 2004, p. 320)

Cole et al. (2004) go on to further clarify that emotions regulate when there are observed changes in behaviour as a result of the emotion being activated, either within the same person (for instance, an increase in breathing or heart rate as a result of experiencing fear) or in others (for instance, emotions of fear or distress in children that elicit comforting behaviours from the caregivers). Moreover, emotions are regulated when there are changes in the emotion activated which can appear within oneself (a child might employ self-soothing

when distressed) or between others (a child pulling faces might make a sad parent laugh).

Cole et al.'s (2004) definition is criticised as too broad. It does not differentiate enough between emotion regulation initiated and achieved by the child and that which is a product of social interactions between a child and an adult, between self-regulation and one imposed by external factors (Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2004). Moreover, Eisenberg and Spinrad (2004) argue that the child's agency and control in the process of emotional regulation needs to be better distinguished. In other words does the child intends to modify behaviour or does it happen involuntarily and are the goals of emotional regulation clear for the child or unplanned? (Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2004). Their proposed working definition for emotion regulation somehow failed to achieve the clarity proposed as an alternative to Cole et al. (2004). It was revisited in later publications, in an attempt to resolve the conceptual issue. Eisenberg et al. (2010a), adopt a distinction between emotion regulation, as defined by Cole et al. (2004) and their proposed emotion-related self -regulation, with the later focusing on:

> (…) The intrinsic processes involved in emotion regulation rather than on the amount of emotion experienced or expressed (…) (Cole et al., 2004, p.2).

Despite the distinction Eisenberg et al. (2010a) adopt the following definition for emotion regulation:

> Processes used to manage and change if, when, and how (e.g., how intensely) one experiences emotion and emotion-related motivational and physiological states, as well as how emotions are expressed behaviorally. (Eisenberg et al., 2010a, p.2)

This definition appears to collude with that proposed by Cole et al. (2004).

Adrian et al. (2011) in their extensive review of research concerning assessment of emotion regulation, adopt Thompson (1994) definition as a benchmark for their review:

> Emotion regulation consists of the extrinsic and intrinsic processes responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional reactions, especially their intensive and temporal features, to accomplish one's goal (Adrian et al., 2011, p.27-28)

1.3.2. Working definition of emotion regulation

The purpose of this section is to provide an explicit definition of the concept of emotion regulation. This definition will support the research design adopted and some of its underlying assumptions - particularly when it comes to the role of adults in children's own emotional regulation and the dual purpose of emotion regulation (Thompson, 2011).

When looking at children and their emotion regulation, the role of adults is undeniably supported by the papers reviewed. Thompson (1994) is the main author to initially propose a dual purpose of emotion regulation – both in enhancing and maintaining but also in inhibiting or controlling emotional arousal. He also pointed out that children may employ their own constructions and interpretations of situations arousing emotional responses, and that serves as a powerful self-regulatory mechanism (Thompson, 1994, 2011).

In light of the theories and research papers reviewed, this research will consider emotion regulation as a process that can be self-determined (emotion self-regulation) but also determined by others (emotion regulated externally). Emotion regulation can happen as result of voluntary effort or as a reactive action to an emotionally arousing situation; it depends on the context and the child's early life experiences. Finally, emotion regulation does involve maintenance and extension as well as management or inhibition of a particular emotion.

1.4 Emotion regulation and attachment theory

One main source of thinking about emotion regulation is attachment theory and the internal working models individuals build as a result of attachment.

> (…) Each individual builds working models of the world and of himself in it, with the aid of which perceives events, forecasts the future, and constructs his plans. In the working models of the world that anyone builds a key feature is his notion of who his attachment figures are, where they may be found, and how they may be expected to respond. Similarly, in the working model of the self that anyone builds a key feature is his notion of how acceptable or unacceptable he himself is in the eyes of his attachment figures. On the structure of these complementary models are based that person's forecasts of how accessible and responsive his attachment figures are likely to be should he turn to them for support (Bowlbly, 1973, p.236).

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) evolved out of experimental research with mammals in a quest to explain infant human behaviour responses when faced with separation and loss of a mother-figure, referred to by Bowlby (1969) as attachment figure. Attachment theory was Bowlby's (1969) response to what bonds a child to his mother-figure and the child's need to maintain proximity to his/her mother-figure.

When a child is attached to someone it means that there is a strong disposition to seek proximity to the attachment figure, particularly when the child is experiencing fear, anxiety, illness or tiredness. In seeking this proximity, the child engages in a number of attachment behaviours that may involve protesting, crying, clinging. In turn, the attachment figure may or may not respond with warmth, proximity and comfort giving behaviours (Bowlby, 1969). The quality of this interaction between the child and his/her attachment figure has a role in regulating the child's emotionality including the development of emotion regulation (Kochanska, 2001; Waters, Virmani, Thompson, Meyer, Raikes & Jochem, 2010), behaviour and physiology (Hoffer, 1994), including

neural development, and these" regulatory processes are the precursors of psychological attachment and its associated emotions" (Hoffer, 1994, p. 207).

> No form of behaviour is accompanied by stronger feeling than is attachment behaviour. The figures towards whom it is directed are loved and their advent is greeted with joy. So long as the child is in the in the presence of a principal attachment figure, or within easy reach, he feels secure. A threat of loss creates anxiety, and actual loss sorrow; both, moreover are likely to arouse anger (p.209, Bowlby, 1969).

Reviewing a substantial body of research evidence, Cassidy (1994) proposed several ways of emotion regulation based on attachment styles. An open, flexible emotion style linked with the child experiencing a secure relationship with a sensitive care giver. A minimising emotions style, particularly with regard to negative emotions, such as anger, sadness or distress; style is linked with the child experiencing an insecure avoidant attachment. The child turns towards the attachment figure for support and proximity only in times of low arousal. A heightening emotion expression style developed through a relationship to an inconsistently available care giver which then leads to an insecure ambivalent attachment. The child develops a strategy of heightening negative emotionality to attract attention and achieve close proximity to the attachment figure. Cassidy (1994) advises caution when conceptualising the third emotion regulation style, as, in her view, the research evidence was not as strong as for the other two. It is also worth noting that most of the research evidence reviewed was concerned with the expression of strong negative emotions and very little with the expression of positive emotions such as joy or happiness.

Tied to attachment theory is research which demonstrates the importance of emotional attunement between infants and their primary care givers. This is the ability to mirror and respond to the affective interactions with significant others (Hutman & Dapretto, 2009). Recent studies evidenced that the quality of such interactions between infants and primary care givers will influence expectations and responses to other relationships in the child's life (Brumariu & Kerns, 2010; Hutman & Dapretto, 2009).

Waters et al. (2010) conducted a US experimental study of 73 mother-child dyads to examine the association between the attachment relationship and the children's emotional development, in particular the children's emotion regulation skills. The children, aged 4 ½ years, participated in two laboratory sessions where they were observed in discussion with their mothers. These discussions were based on four emotionally charged situations (two for sad and two for angry) from the past. These situations were previously discussed and agreed between the mothers and the researcher. Mothers then completed attachment questionnaires and the children were assessed for emotion understanding. The second stage involved taking part in a "denied request task" (p.40). The children were allowed to choose a snack, whilst their mothers were out of the room and told it was fine to eat it immediately but best to wait for mother's permission once she was back in the room. A certain level of deceit was involved here because the mothers were not aware of what the children were instructed separately. The mothers were told not to allow the children to eat their snack until after returning home. After 2 minutes of video observations, where the children reached various degrees of frustrations, mothers were prompted to allow their children to eat their snacks, and both mothers and children were debriefed whilst watching a recording of their session. This seemed the only point in the study where children were asked to give their views directly. They were asked to identify how they felt at certain points, as shown by the video recording, and the intensity of their feelings. The children were also asked why they felt that way, what they could have done to feel better and how their mothers felt at the same time and why. Again some disparity in measures seemed present since the children were given only three options to choose from: happy, sad or angry, whilst the mothers could attribute as many emotions to their children as they wished. Keeping in mind some of the methodological inconsistencies, the results of the study indicated a better need for parents to accurately interpret their child's feelings if they are to offer appropriate emotion coaching. In an attempt to explain disagreement between maternal perceptions of feelings experienced by children and child self-report, researchers also pondered on whether young children provided clear emotional signals of the feelings they experienced. They speculated whether the young children reported the same feeling in the subsequent interview to that experienced in the task because they were focused on the happy outcome of the situation

(receiving the snack) rather than the frustration they displayed when the treat was delayed. Results also indicated that when a secure attachment was in place concordance was higher between maternal perception and child self-report, suggesting that parental sensitivity to children's emotions was higher in more secure relationships. A secure attachment, alongside a good understanding of negative and distressing emotions, was also found to facilitate children's willingness to discuss previous experiences of negative emotions (Waters et al., 2010).

Also linked with attachment theory is the theory of mind (ToM) which "involves the ability to recognise and correctly infer mental states in others such as desire, perspective, knowledge and belief" (Cahill, Deater-Deckard, Pike & Hughes, 2007, p. 45).

> It is assumed that children have a ToM if they recognize that another person can hold a belief that is different from theirs (…) and that the person will behave in certain way on the basis of that belief. (Ornaghi, Grazzani, Cherubin, Conte & Piralli, 2015, p. 167)

The links with attachment are insofar as placing importance on the quality of the parent – child relationship as precursors for the development of ToM (Cahill et al., 2007; Meins, Fernyhough, Wainwright, Das Gupta, Fradley & Tuckey, 2002). In turn, ToM skills have been related to children's social and emotional development (Cahill et al., 2007; Meins et al., 2002). Although the links between developing secure attachments and the development of ToM skills have been inconsistent (Meins et al., 2002), the development of ToM has been linked to the mothers' early predisposition to comment on the infants' mental states, such as using language that comments on infants' knowledge, thoughts, desires and interests (Meins et al., 2002).

It was anticipated that children's responses to the researcher's questions, their ability to show empathy towards the fictional characters employed by the research methodology and the ability to engage with the researcher, as an unfamiliar adult, but in the presence of their key worker, offering a secure base

would be greatly explained by their attachment preferences and their internal working models (Bowlby,1973, 2005; Cassidy, 1994).

However, the main focus of this study was not to solely interpret children's views through the lens of the attachment theory or any other theoretical approach as this would have been disempowering (Ingram, 2013). This study was naturalistic in nature and was interested in children's views as children expressed them (Harding & Atkinson, 2009)

1.5 Developmental context

The literature on child development and emotion regulation indicates that a number of key developments occur in the preschool years and these influence the development of emotion regulation (Nives Sala et al., 2014).

Language is seen as a critical tool for the development of young children's self-regulation (Robson, 2010, p. 229). Research suggests that verbal ability in 3 to 4 year olds may be associated with the type of emotion regulation strategies employed by children in response to emotionally situations (Nives Sala et al., 2014), particularly for positive emotions (Liebermann, Giesbrecht and Müller, 2007).

Between the ages of 36 to 48 months, milestones in children's language development include the ability to construct and combine more complex sentences, embed clauses and complex question forms in their speech, use appropriate speech registers, and show an increasing understanding of pragmatics (Keenan & Evans, 2009, p. 214). Typically developing 3 to 4 year olds demonstrate a breath of interest in social world, are asking a lot of 'why?'; 'when?'; 'how?' questions, and are able to talk about inner states and rules, i.e.: what is good / bad / allowed. At this age, typically developing children are also able to adopt emotional states within pretend play (Sheridan, 2008, p.77). At the age of 3 years old, typically developing children display an intelligible vocabulary but their speech may contain immature sound substitutions and unconventional grammatical forms. At this age children still display self-talk, in long monologues, mostly in relation to the immediate present and during their

pretend play (Sheridan, 2008, p. 41). Around the age of 4 years old, typically developing children's speech is completely intelligible and mostly grammatically correct, children are able to give connected accounts of recent events and experiences and enjoy listening to and telling long stories, at times confusing fact and fantasy (Sheridan, 2008, p. 44 – 45).

According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, typically developing 3 and 4 year old children's thinking and cognitive skills are at the preoperational stage of development. A key milestone is the development of representational abilities observed in children's language, mathematical concepts and pretend play. However, according to Piaget (1926), children's thinking, at this stage in their cognitive development, displays a number of limitations: egocentrism (the inability to think from a different perspective other than one's own); animistic thinking (children attribute life-life qualities to objects and animals); inability to employ mental operations (i.e.: reversibility or conservation tasks) and centration (children focus only on one characteristic of the task / problem) (Keenan & Evans, 2009, p. 169; Piaget, 1926). Similarly to Piaget, Vygotsky (1978) saw children as active explorers of the world around them, but unlike Piaget, Vygotsky, saw the cognitive development of children not in isolation or stage-like, but occurring in the context of culture, language and social environment. One of the key ideas proposed by Vygotsky is that children's cognitive development happens in the context of the child's interaction with social partners, adults and children, who are more skilled than the child (Keenan & Evans, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978).

The development of cognitive abilities in the preschool years including representational abilities (Hutman & Dapretto, 2009; Keenan & Evans, 2009), executive functions – conscious control of thoughts and actions (Liebermann et al., 2007) and ToM (Cahill et al., 2007; Nives Sala et al., 2014) allows young children to "(…) evoke memories in order to alter emotional responses" (Keenan & Evans, 2009, p. 247)

In addition to considering general language development research indicates that "(…) younger children may change preferences within a short time without realising the inconsistency (…)", moreover, "(…) young children's preferences are more abstract and less influenced by adults' or peers' expectations (…)"

(Gibson et al., 2010, p. 1405). The methodology employed by this research addressed these issues, i.e.: by gathering data over time to ensure children's views were captured accurately. Further details are discussed in later chapters of this paper.

Changes in young children's emotional expression are seen as a direct result of emotion socialisation – attempts made by adults and other people in children's lives in recognising and rewarding certain emotions and not responding or ignoring others. And language represents one mean of emotion socialisation (Cole et al., 2004; Keenan & Evans, 2009). Children's social experiences in the preschool years also allows them to build a set of rules, to enhance their own emotion understanding and to become more independent in regulating emotions without external support (Halberstadt et al., 2001; Nives Sala et al., 2014). Further details on the development of emotion regulation in the context of language development and parental socialisation of emotions are discussed in the next chapter of this paper.

1.6 Researcher's position

During the first year of training, the researcher became a mother for the first time so readings around her own emotional wellbeing and that of her daughter's resonated with the researcher's personal interest in the role adults play in supporting children's emotional development, and in particular, the children's emotion regulation. The journey to becoming a qualified Educational Psychologist (EP) and carrying out research as part of the process, alongside becoming a mother and growing more confident in the role as a parent has been fascinating and, nonetheless, challenging.

As a practicing psychologist in training, the researcher has developed a keen interest in representing the views of children and young people in her professional practice reports. In light of new legislation, and contextual aspects discussed earlier, educational psychologists (EPs) have reflected on the need to develop a professional practice that enables children of all ages to be heard

and “included in plans being proposed for them” (Harding & Atkinson, 2009, p.126). Therefore, the researcher was also keen to explore best ways of developing her own professional practice by reflecting on the methodology used and by asking children themselves which methods of engagement they found helpful, or which they preferred, and why.

Throughout this thesis the terms emotion and emotional regulation were used at some points interchangeably as they were both found to represent the same concept in the literature reviewed (Grolnick et al., 1999; Thompson, 1991). However, for the purpose of reporting findings and discussing results, the term emotion regulation was preferred as was the one mostly employed and used by key researchers in the field.

The researcher was open to the unknown and unexpected (Mercieca & Mercieca, 2014) thus without, necessarily, having an agenda for what she hoped the study would find.

1.7 Rationale for proposed research

The purpose of this exploratory study was to understand the emotion regulation experience for young children attending a nursery school in the local authority the researcher worked in. Throughout the research the ‘emotion regulation experience’ was generally described as “the set of processes involved in initiating, maintaining and modulating emotional responsiveness, both positive and negative” (Grolnick et al., 1999, p. 4). Happiness was seen as a positive emotion with its initiation and maintenance as an important goal for the children, enhancing play and creating positive exchanges. Similarly, anger, as a negative emotion, was seen to serve adaptive functions for the child, enabling, for instance, children to state their needs (Grolnick et al., 1999). The study did not aim to assess young children’s understanding of emotions but rather to gather the children’s perspective on what they found helpful, for their emotional self-regulation, when they interacted with the adults around them. A multi-method approach to data collection was employed by this research.

> The multifaceted nature of emotion and emotion regulation lend themselves well to a multi-method assessment. Yet (…) few researchers actually utilize multi-method designs (…). A primary issue surrounding the multi-method approach concerns the validity of children's report of their emotional experiences (…). Children's self-reports of emotional experiences are valuable and offer information that might not otherwise be gleaned from other's reports (Bjorklund, Ackerman, LeFevre, & Mondloch, 2011, p.135).

1.8 Research questions

The aim of the research was to investigate the children's perceptions of the role adults play in the children's emotional regulation. The research was qualitative in design and aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are children's perspectives on factors that influence their emotion regulation?
2. What methods do young children find helpful in allowing them to express their views on emotion regulation?

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Overview

This chapter will critically assess the research around emotion regulation involving young children, with particular reference to the role of adults in children's emotion regulation and studies that elicited children's views. The main body of this chapter will be concerned with research around emotion regulation and give a contemporary picture of how this research is shaped alongside a discussion of specific studies. In support of the second research question, studies that looked at eliciting young children's views through creative methods are reviewed. There is a gap in the literature exploring young children's views on emotion regulation in general, and in particular how young children see adults supporting their emotion regulation using qualitative triangulated data collection methods.

The systematic literature review was carried out using EBSCO, looking at the databases: Academic Search Complete, British Education Index, Child Development & Adolescent Studies, Education Research Complete, ERIC, PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO; ETHOS; Google Scholar, JSTOR, Science Direct, Taylor & Francis and Wiley Online Library. Further details about inclusion and exclusion criteria and the process of article selection can be found in Appendix 2.

2.2 Emotion regulation in young children

An extensive review by Adrian et al., (2011), of the past 35 years of research around emotion regulation in children, covering 42 clinical, developmental and emotion psychology journals, revealed that most of the publications (over 80%) occurred within the past decade and 53 studies (33.8%) involved samples of toddlers or pre-schoolers (children aged between 2 and 5 years old). The review indicated that more longitudinal studies have been conducted with samples of infants to 5 year old children than with older age children. The meta-

analysis also uncovered that observation, as a way of collecting data, was predominantly used with infants and toddlers whilst self-reporting was used mainly with older children and adolescents. In terms of the number of methods used, out of the 157 studies reviewed, only 37 studies used two methods to measure emotion regulation, 17 studies used three methods and only 7 studies used four methods for collecting data on emotion regulation (Adrian et al., 2011). The review did not offer information on whether the studies were quantitative, qualitative or employed a mixed method approach and they also acknowledged that some journals were omitted because they were considered too broad for the field of children and emotion regulation.

The focus for this systematic literature review is on emotion regulation with particular reference to studies gathering young children's views. The general picture seemed to be that there is an extensive body of research, mainly coming from the US, concerning young children and emotion regulation but that the methodology employed is quantitative in nature with very little participatory methods. Children were mainly required to visit laboratories, together with their parents, and carry out set tasks or activities which aimed to assess their emotion regulation. Data was often supplemented with other self-report measures, i.e.: parental or teacher questionnaires. In the UK, the research tends to be less quantitative and more qualitative, or a mixture of both, with methodologies informed by children's rights (UNCR 1989; 2005) and promoting a culture of participation. For a review of such UK studies see Harden (2012) and Robson (2010) in the next sections of this chapter.

2.2.1 The development of emotion regulation in early childhood

Emotional development involves both elements of emotion understanding and emotional control. Early emotion recognition occurs in infancy (Hutman & Dapretto, 2009) whilst young children during the preschool period already show awareness and understanding of not only their own emotions but that of others. They are capable of interpreting others' emotional expression and show empathy (Halberstadt, Denham & Dunsmore, 2001; Hutman & Dapretto, 2009):

> Empathy involves an affective sharing of experience that, in some cases, gives rise to behaviour that alleviates the causes or the symptoms of another person's distress" (Hutman & Dapretto, 2009, p.374).

Moreover, young children show the ability to use self-regulatory strategies, to modulate and to manage their emotions so that they are able to cope in situations that elicit an emotional response (Halberstadt, Denham & Dunsmore, 2001). Emotional control is generally viewed as emotional reactivity and emotional regulation (Leerkes, et al., 2008).

Since children's development takes place in a social and cultural context, emotion regulation is also seen in the context of culture and social norms, as an ability to modulate responses to emotional arousal in ways that are acceptable within one's culture (Grolnick, et al., 1999; Keenan & Evans, 2009; Klimes-Dougan & Zeman, 2007). Emotion socialisation and parenting practices with regard to children's expression of emotions will be highly dependent on the values promoted by the culture, beliefs systems and religion surrounding the child (Boyer, 2013; Klimes-Dougan & Zeman, 2007). A review of literature around influences of family context on children's emotion regulation was carried out by Sheffield Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers and Robinson (2007).

The development of emotion regulation is conceptualised in the research literature within the context of the primary caregiving relationship during infancy, mostly observed between mother and infant dyads (Bird et al, 2011; Bowie, 2010; Cole et al., 2004;Eisenberg et al., 2010a; Miller et al, 2002). To begin with infants rely almost entirely on caregivers to regulate their level of arousal and distress (Eisenberg et al., 2010a; Grolnick et al., 1999; Thompson, 1991). But at the same time emotions experienced by infants regulate their mothers' behaviour (Cole et al., 2004). This exchange of emotional communication, between typical mothers and infants, is suggested to be responsible for a number of developmental outcomes including the child's own ability to regulate his/her emotions (Cole et al., 2004).

During the first years of life children will rapidly learn how to regulate and modulate their emotional responsiveness and behaviours without much external

monitoring (Eisenberg et al., 2010a; Grolnick et al., 1999; Robson, 2010). With language acquisition comes the ability to verbalise and conceptualise emotions and to accept direction and mediation from adults in expressing and making sense of their own emotions (Bowie, 2010). Adults continue to have an important role to play in the self-regulation of emotions. Alongside temperament (Grolnick et al., 1999; Rothbart, Sheese, Rueda & Posner, 2011), neurophysiological and cognitive changes (Eisenberg, Smith & Spinrad, 2011) including physiological regulation (Hastings, Nuselovici, Utendale, Coutya, McShane & Sulivan, 2008; Taylor, Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2015), the caregiver's contribution is seen as essential in explaining individual differences in emotion self-regulation (Eisenberg et al., 2010a; Grolnick et al., 1999; Hutman & Dapretto, 2009; Robson, 2010; Sheffield Morris et al., 2007).

2.3 The role of adults in children's emotional regulation

The role of adults, in providing initial effortful control of emotions is seen as the socialisation of emotion (Eisenberg et al., 2010a). Young children might not always rely on their primary caregivers to intervene or provide distracting activities but actively engage the adults in other activities, away from the stimulus that is provoking arousal (Grolnick et al., 1999). Moreover, adult involvement is believed to partly explain the move from extrinsic, relying on others for soothing and comfort to intrinsic, self-regulation of emotional arousal (Robson, 2010). Eisenberg, Cumberland and Spinrad (1998) believe that the socialisation of emotions occurs in three different ways:

> (a) socializer's reactions to children's emotions, (b) socializer's expression of emotion in the family or toward the child, and (c) socializers' discussion of emotion (Eisenberg et al., 1998, p. 15-16)

The precursors to self-regulation are maternal sensitivity and responsiveness to infants' emotional cues, as well as warmth and parenting style (Eisenberg et al., 1998; Eisenberg et. al, 2010a). As we have seen in the previous chapter, there are strong links with attachment theory and internal working models (Adam, Megan, Gunnar & Tanaka, 2004; Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 2005; Cassidy, 1994; Hofer, 1994; Kochanska, 2001; Waters et al, 2010), with social context and

social learning theory (Gross, 1998; Hutman & Dapretto, 2009). The idea that adults mediate and scaffold understanding of emotions through the medium of language is also supported by Robson, (2010).

Exploring the role of adults in the context of language development, Oppenheim, Nir, Warren and Emde (1997) carried out an US study of 51 children aged between four and a half and five and a half years old and their mothers. All participants also took part in a larger longitudinal study on preschoolers' narrative development in the context of the family. This study aimed to look at the association between mother and child co-construction of emotionally charged narratives and the children's later independent production of narratives about emotions and relationships. The study also explored the links between the mother and child co-construction and later children's emotional and behavioural regulation (p.285). Children participated in mother-child separation-reunion co-construction when they were four and a half years old and in completing the Mac Arthur Story Stem Battery to elicit independent narratives in response to emotionally charged situations. A year later, children were required to complete vocabulary tests whilst their mothers completed behavioural and emotional regulation checklists (Child Behaviour Checklist). Statistical analysis of the data indicated that children who were more emotionally coherent during their co-construction narrative were also more coherent during the story completion task, had more pro-social themes and less aggressive themes. These children were also rated by their mothers as having fewer behavioural problems a year later (p.289). The authors made recommendations for future research to explore in more depth the factors influencing the production of emotionally coherent narratives in children, as well as looking at the links between children's production of such narratives and their emotion regulation.

In terms of adult involvement and its contribution to children's development of emotion regulation there is an extensive body of evidence looking at mother – child interaction and behaviours that interfere with children's emotional development (Morris, Denham, Bassett & Curby, 2013). A high number of these studies come from developmental or clinical psychology and are concerned with abnormal behaviours (Adrian et al., 2011; Harden, 2012). Although that was not

the case of Oppenheim et al. (1997) in terms of their sample of participants, some of the findings were concerned with the relationship between children's ability to generate emotionally coherent narratives and later parental reports of children's behavioural and/or emotional problems.

Moving away from studying the mother-child dyads and employing a qualitative methodology was Harden's (2012) UK research. Looking at exploring emotion regulation in a classroom context, Harden (2012) aimed to ascertain "children's experiences of emotions, the management of emotions and the ways in which emotions are constructed" (p.86) by looking at the children's relationships with adults and peers in school. The researcher came from a social constructionist position and aimed to uncover the socio-cultural influences that influence how children define, experience and manage emotions (p.84). A multi-method ethnographic study it involved a mixed socio-economic sample of 27 children (aged 6 -7 years) from a Scottish primary school. Data was collected through extensive observations over a four month period, individual interviews with 12 of the children carried out at home; group interviews at school, as well as through photographs children took of places that made them happy. The researcher used a number of techniques during the interviews: children were asked to attribute emotions to an alien cartoon character who had no emotions; looking at faces on a computer the children had to describe how the people depicted felt; discussions around the photographs children took during their participation in the research. The children used not only words but also movement, facial expressions and references to bodily sensations to describe emotions. Harden (2012) also made some interesting observation of children's emotional display in the classroom and she reflected that the regimented routine of the school day did not allow for much freedom of emotional expression. Harden (2012) perceived the teacher as somehow limiting children's movement, censoring (thumb sucking) or approving (hair plaiting) certain emotional expressions, and

> Continually engaged in regulation the children's bodies and emotions and instilling in them a sense of the importance of developing this control for themselves. This was often very subtle – a look, a gesture or a gentle touch – to bring an errant child back in line. If the actions persisted the child was moved or openly verbally reprimanded. The children

> themselves also took part in this by monitoring each other's actions (…). The emphasis was on the brain as the rational counter to impulsive bodily emotions (Harden, 2012, p.88).

Harden (2012) also noted subtle subversive challenging coming from the children where they carried on with actions (change their seating) and interactions (chatting) with peers to suit their needs. Harden (2012) concluded that children have very little power and control over their lives in school despite progressive UK educational policies. The data presented seemed to suggest that "children experienced and described their emotions through their bodies" and that within a classroom context, "children's emotional expression is contained through the regulation of their bodies" (Harden, 2012, p.91). Whilst this study adds to the body of qualitative research around young children and emotion regulation, discussion of findings, though an interesting read, somehow lacked clarity around the role teachers played in children's emotional regulation beyond the perceived controlling role of the school as an institution. Moreover, the children's perspective on the role adults played could merely be guessed via the researcher's interpretation.

2.4 Voice of the Child: techniques used in research

Waters et al (2010) study, reviewed in the previous chapter, was a promising step forward to elicit young children's views as part of the research's methodology. It also included young children's self-reports. Although data was analysed quantitatively, the researchers reported some qualitative behavioural observations made during data collection. However, the main body of data was based on maternal self-reports, maternal questionnaires and independent observer's ratings and coding of children self-reports, mother – child conversations and children's behaviour responses during the denied request task.

In her longitudinal study, Bowie (2010) pointed out that most studies concerning children's emotions rely on measures that involve adults self-reporting on the children in their care or on researcher's observations of the children

participating in the study. In their experimental study, Waters et al. (2010) uncovered that there was greater match between the independent observer and child self-report than between mothers and their own children, particularly when it came to reporting feelings of anger. Bowie (2010) went on further to propose a review of a measure of children self-reporting on their emotional regulation, and thoughts and feelings concerning that, including the children's perception of parental support when dealing with strong emotions . The Child Self-Report of Emotional Experience (CSREE) (Taylor & Carère, 2002), a self-report questionnaire measuring emotions of sadness and anger, was used with 126 US children aged between 5 and 14 years at three points in time. Interestingly, data from the children was compared with parent and teacher questionnaires "used to examine the predictive validity of CSREE" (Bowie, 2010, p.78) meaning whether this measure of emotion regulation could predict externalising and/or internalising problem behaviours over time (Bowie, 2010). The findings were interesting but researcher's conclusions were ambivalent. Regression analysis revealed greater predictive association between children's self-report with difficulties regulating anger and later self-reported symptoms of depression, as compared with teacher or parent observations of children's emotion regulation and later observations of depressive symptoms or anxiety in children. Given these results, Bowie (2010) concluded that more accurate information can be obtained directly from the children. The author also proposed future directions for research in exploring whether adults could be better at providing "insight into symptoms that children are not recognizing within themselves" (Bowie, 2010, p.81), a recommendation that reads somehow as disempowering the children's voice.

2.4.1 Young children and narrative techniques

The use of narrative techniques appeared to be the preferred methodological path in an attempt to involve young children more in the research process. Research studies varied on their position regarding this type of data and on whether they felt the need to supplement it with some child assessments or additional adult data collection procedures.

Although removed from a naturalistic environment, Dennis and Kelemen (2009) carried out research that aimed to clarify whether preschool children understand emotion focused strategies (i.e.: distraction); whether children view strategies differently depending on the emotion being regulated; and lastly, whether children's level of emotional understanding is linked to their ability to cope with emotionally charged situations (Dennis & Kelemen, 2019, p. 246). It was interesting to note the researchers' position on the children's views as they chose to compare preschoolers' answers, generated during the research, to those of adults. Data was collected from children's parents, as a way of evaluating children's views. It was considered adults have more experience with emotion regulation and hence "their [adults] views on effective strategies provide one basis for evaluating child views" (Dennis & Kelemen, 2010, p.246). 62 children, aged between three and four years old, and 47 adults, from economically and ethnic diverse areas of New York, participated in the study. Each child spent approximately two hours in the lab completing a series of assessments (the impossible perfect circle and delay of gratification) and a puppet procedure. The puppet procedure was a 30 minutes activity where children were presented with three vignettes in which animal puppets became either mad, sad or scared but needed to stop feeling these negative emotions. After each scenario children were asked to rate three pairs of different emotion regulation strategies, which were acted out by the puppets. Children were also asked to indicate how the puppets would be feeling, as a result of those strategies, using a scale of 0 to 3 that would indicate changes in the emotion experienced (no change, little change, change to neutral, and change to happy (Dennis & Kelemen, 2009, p.246-248). The adults were asked to complete a self-report questionnaire on their children's social skills and problem behaviours as well as answering the questions administered to the children during the puppet procedure. Statistical analysis of data indicated that cognitive and behavioural distraction, and repairing the situation, were considered the most effective strategies by the children. However, in contrast to adults, children engaged the puppets in more rumination and venting (Dennis & Kelemen, 2009). Children had to interact with the researchers in an unfamiliar environment and for quite some time; as for the vignettes in the puppet procedure, those were all presented during one session, so the children's responses could have been influenced by the interviewing conditions. The

authors do recommend future research to include multiple vignettes spread over a few testing sessions in order to minimise the possibility that children's emotion regulation strategies were dependent on the specific scenarios used in their study. Although the children were asked to give their views on various emotion regulation strategies, it seemed it was mainly so that those views would confirm the ones held by their parents. Moreover, the children were presented with a choice of emotion regulation strategies rather than the researchers being curious in what children had to say independently.

A novel procedure for assessing preschool-age children's awareness of emotion regulation strategies for anger and sadness was designed by Cole, Dennis, Smith-Simon and Cohen (2009) in their study of 116 US children aged between 3 and 4 years old. The procedure used three cloth puppets enacting three vignettes during the one hour long children's laboratory sessions: one for happy used as a training item, with the other two used for sadness and anger. After each vignette ended the puppets turned directly to the children and elicited strategies to overcome the named (by the researcher) emotion of either sadness or anger. After the children generated their own strategies they were asked by the researcher to identify another appropriate strategy from a choice of two given by the researcher, one inspired by the literature on emotion regulation as being successful, and the other one regarded as socially undesirable (such as hitting or dwelling on a problem) (Cole et al., 2009, p.329). Children were also observed in the laboratory interacting with their mothers during a set of frustration tasks and assessed for verbal ability whilst their mothers completed child temperament questionnaires. Maternal responses to child negative emotions were assessed during one of the frustration tasks: challenging wait (Cole et al., 2009, p.330). Coding and statistical analysis of data led to children's self-reported strategies classified as: self-focused internal (thinking of something else); self-focused external (use of action to change internal state) and problem-focused (behaviour directed at changing the situation). Maternal responses were grouped as either providing structure for the child to self-regulate when the child expressed negative emotion (structuring such as suggesting the child redirect the attention from the source of frustration); or providing support when the mother was present and comforting

in response to child negative emotion (expressing sympathy, being attentive and positive with the child). Maternal structuring and support were treated as mutually exclusive and if both occurred at the same time, only structuring was coded (Cole et al., 2009, p.332). This could have led to some response being omitted from the analysis and the findings for this procedure artificially balanced towards one type of maternal response. Maternal responses were found not to influence children's generation of emotion regulation strategies presented during the puppet procedure, but they did account for children's endorsement of effective anger management strategies. Children who received less support from their mothers generated more strategies for anger. The authors did recommend for future longitudinal research to explore in more detail the relationship between parenting styles and children's learning about strategies for emotion regulation. They also recommended future research to take into account a range of emotions, not just anger and sadness as in their study. Children's verbal ability did not seem to influence the overall results, one exception was for generation of strategies relating to anger management. Findings from the puppet procedure indicated that children were better at recognising effective strategies, from a given choice, rather than independently generate them in response to the puppet vignettes. However, Cole et al. (2009) recognised that despite using a development appropriate method for data collection, children had to generate emotion regulation strategies talking to an unfamiliar adult in a novel laboratory setting so that could have influenced the results (Cole et al., 2009, p.344).

An investigation into young children's self-reported strategies used for regulating negative emotions was carried out by Davis, Levine, Lench and Quas, (2010). The researchers started from a premise that negative emotions are more likely to prompt for an effortful control to return to a neutral level of arousal (Gross,1998) and were set to demonstrate that young children were able to generate metacognitive strategies (changing one's thoughts or goals, Davis et al., 2010, p.498) to downregulate negative emotions. Two studies were carried out with children aged 5 to 6 years old recruited from two primary schools in Chicago. It was unclear when reading the paper whether the data collection was carried out in a lab or elsewhere.

In the first study all eighty children taking part, who came from a predominantly white middle and upper class background, were told four narratives about a child experiencing failure to attain a goal. Each story had two versions but they were deemed identical in structure by the researchers, and the children were randomly assigned to hear the various versions. It is not clear whether different versions of the same emotion story could have influenced the responses generated. After each story children were asked whether the child in the story would feel mad or sad or both, and how the child in the story would make those feelings go away. Children's responses were coded into general emotion regulation strategies (goal reinstatement, goal substitution, goal forfeiture, primary social support, secondary social support, agent focused and metacognitive, Davis et al., 2010, p.501); specific types of metacognitive strategies (changing what children thought or knew about a situation or changing their mental state, Davis et al., 2010, p.502) and proportion scores were also calculated (how often each emotion regulation strategy was reported by each child; how many children reported sadness or anger or both). Data was analysed statistically and results indicated that 58% of participants reported primary social support seeking (enlisting the help of another person) as the most common strategy, followed by metacognitive strategies (52% of respondents) and goal forfeiture (reported by 46% of participants). Discussion focused on children's metacognitive strategies with researchers stating that

> (…) The sophistication of children's emotion regulation may be even more evident when they have richer, more detailed autobiographical experience on which they can draw when discussing emotion regulation (Davis et al., 2010, p.504)

Their next study aimed to bring more evidence to that statement. There was no mention of the potential impact of family child rearing practices and parental socio-economic status on the results reported in the first study.
Study 2 involved interviews with children from 92 parent-child dyads, with children predominantly white female from a stable and affluent socio-economic background. It was part of a larger study looking into children's memory for salient personal experiences (Davis et al., 2010, p.504). Before each child was interviewed, parents were asked to describe to the researchers, past situations

where their child felt sad, angry and scared. Using a semi-structured interview schedule, each child was then asked to describe situations that made them feel sad, angry and afraid, and if the child failed to provide an example, the one described by their parent earlier was mentioned to them. Children were asked to identify what they did to make the feelings go away with additional prompts to elicit further details (Davis et al., 2010, p.504). Interviews were video recorded and the children's responses were coded and analysed statistically. Results indicated that anger was characterized by a motivation to overcome obstacles and reinstate goals whilst sadness was associated with abandoning goals. Children preferred seeking emotional support when they were feeling sad or fearful and targeted agents responsible for their feelings when experiencing anger. Metacognitive strategies (reported by 69% of participants) were mostly used to overcome sadness and fear rather than anger (Davis et al., 2010, p.505). Enlisting primary social support to overcome feelings was reported by 49% of participants (Davis et al., 2010, p.506). Davis et al. (2010) concluded that children in their study evoked a range of emotion regulation strategies in both hypothetical (but familiar) and autobiographical situations and that "previous experience with emotional situations is vital for children's generation of appropriate emotion regulation strategies" (Davis et al., 2010, p.507). The authors recommended future research to explore the link between children's understanding of contextual factors surrounding an emotional situation (whether an event is controllable or uncontrollable) and their use of specific emotion regulation strategies. As in study 1, potential influences of family background and parental mindedness were not discussed so the results could not be generalized. Nonetheless, eliciting children's views on their own emotion regulation, through the medium of stories, yielded interesting results and added to the body of knowledge into the "sophistication and complexity of young children's emotion regulation repertoire" (Davis et al, 2010, p.508).

Nives Sala, Pons and Molina (2014) – Italian study investigating the development of emotion regulation strategies as reflected in the narratives of 69 preschool children aged between 3 and 6 years old. This experimental study was based on a story completion task (Emotion Regulation Story Stem) inspired by research on attachment. Five stories involving the occurrence of a single emotion (fear, anger, sadness, shame, guilt) were acted out with puppets by the

interviewer and the children were asked to complete the story. The interviews were videotaped and data was transcribed verbatim. It was not clear how data was coded but four different strategies emerged: behavioural strategy (engagement in action to manage emotion); social support (intervention of another character to help protagonist overcome emotion); attentional deployment (distraction by thinking or doing something else); and cognitive reappraisal (protagonist able to regulate emotion by reframing the situation). Children also completed tests of emotion comprehension, receptive vocabulary skills and non-verbal intelligence. Data was analysed statistically with some age and gender differences explored. Results indicated that eliciting the help of others (social support strategies) did not vary with age but it was more prevalent in female participants. Also emotion comprehension did not seem to influence the complexity of emotion regulation strategies employed by the children. Nives Sala et al. (2014) recommended further research to explore how seeking social support might be related to security of attachment. Another recommendation was for research exploring emotion regulation strategies as described by children's narratives with a particular focus on individual differences in their use and in relation to the nature of the different emotions presented (Nives Sala, 2014, p.451).

2.4.2 The use of visual media with children

In a previous section, the study by Harden (2012), was discussed, research which involved a multi-method approach to data collection including the use of photographs that children took as a basis for discussion around children's emotional expression.

Robson's, (2010) study looked at children's engagement in self-directed play activities and their subsequent reflection upon this to ascertain children's levels of self-regulation and metacognition. 12 children aged between three and four years old and six key workers from three EYFS settings in London took part in the study, with data for the project being collected over a period of a year. The research started from the premise that children have their own views and a right to be listened to. It employed a combination of instruments for data collection: videotaped episodes of children's self-initiated play activities and audiotaped

discussions about the videotaped episodes, between children and their key worker, as a form of reflective dialogue (RD). A semi-structured interview schedule was used to guide the RDs. Both video episodes and RDs were coded and analysed using the Cambridge Independent Learning (C.Ind.Le) framework (Robson, 2010, p.231) and aimed to uncover evidence of children's metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive regulation and emotional and motivational regulation. Despite looking at more than just emotion regulation and without being focused on any particular emotions, the study touched upon the role adults played when engaging in activities with children. The results were interesting as they showed that when adults engaged with children in the joint construction of understanding videotaped episodes of children's play, the children displayed higher levels of self-regulation and metacognition. This suggested that interaction with teachers could play a significant role in children's development and display of self-regulatory skills (Robson, 2010).

2.5 Summary

The vast majority of studies on children's emotion regulation were concerned with downregulating of negative emotions. There appears to be strong research evidence demonstrating the role adults play in children's emotion regulation. However, there appears to be a gap in research looking at the role of adults from children's perspective. It was interesting to note that the studies that made explicit references to the voice of the child and young children's rights to participate in research, came from UK or Europe. US studies seemed more concerned with achieving the golden standard of research: randomised control trials and any level immediately below that, and offered extensive information on assessing emotion regulation in children rather than exploring ideas on children's participation in research.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Data Collection

This chapter outlines the researcher's ontological and epistemological position, formally states the research questions and describes the research's methodology, design, and the way data was collected and analysed. This research was qualitative in nature and had the voice of the child at the heart of it.

3.1 Research philosophy

The research thinking was driven by a critical realist ontology. Taking a critical realist ontology guided the research's epistemology, how data was collected and interpreted. The researcher started from a premise that there is a reality: 'emotions' and that emotional arousal occurs for most children. However their experience and expression of it are greatly shaped by the individual's context – their home and nursery context – and this research was situated within one research site – a nursery school. The critical realism position assumes that patterns and trends in children's experiences of emotion regulation could be attributable to the quality of child- adult interaction at nursery but also by individual cultures and family rituals around emotions at home (Day, 2010). However, children are not viewed as simply passive recipients, at the mercy of such determining factors and influences. Critical realists would argue that children can actively transform and are transformed by these emotion regulation experiences (Huston, 2001). Having a systemic perspective on child development has also influenced this research's premise that children transform and are transformed by their interaction with the immediate environment (Roffey, 2012), in this case – significant adults in children's lives and the early years setting they attended.

As we have seen in the literature review, children's development, and their experience and expression of emotion regulation is considered against the

social and cultural context in which they live (Grolnick, et al., 1999; Keenan & Evans, 2009). Emerging in the context of the primary giving relationship, children's emotion regulation is highly dependent on the emotional exchange between the child and the attachment figure (Bird et al, 2011; Bowie, 2010; Cole et al., 2004;Eisenberg et al., 2010a; Miller et al., 2002). During the first years of life, children will rapidly learn how to regulate and modulate their emotional responsiveness and behaviours without much external monitoring (Grolnick et al., 1999; Eisenberg et al., 2010a; Robson, 2010). With language acquisition comes the ability to verbalise and conceptualise emotions and to accept direction and mediation from adults in expressing and making sense of their own emotions (Bowie, 2010). Adults, however, continue to have an important role to play in the self-regulation of emotions. How do children view the role of adults? This question shaped the data collection procedure by eliciting children's views on hypothetical scenarios which would reflect their actual experiences at home or at school. This research aimed to uncover some of these underlying mechanisms and factors that shape children's experiences of emotions.

Critical realism can be viewed as a 'contemporary constructionism' (Kelly & Woolfson, 2008), in that meaning and reality can be viewed as to some extent interpretive but not wholly so. However, adults cannot recreate the experience of childhood: 'we may vividly remember as adults snapshot events from our childhoods, or the generalised quality (good, bad or indifferent), of our own childhood experience, but we can never go back and be "in the moment' of childhood experience with the embodied perspective of a child" (Mayall, 2000, pp.122).

There is a need for more increased attention to descriptions of the world as experienced by those within it (Mertens, 2005). This study's epistemology is that knowing an individual's experience and context of a phenomenon is valuable for the development of knowledge about that phenomenon, in this case emotion regulation. By considering context in this way the researcher is open to the possibility of variability of perceptions: we can only have a transitive view of the reality and all knowledge is shaped by its social context. In contrast to a social constructionist approach that would see all perceptions as equally valid, critical

realism allows for the notion that some views may be silenced and participation excluded (Houston, 2001).

Research should aim to seek out those whose voices are not heard (Mertens, 2005). Children tend to be a marginalized group in society (Clark & Moss, 2001; Roberts-Holmes, 2005). As we have seen in the literature review, a meta-analysis by Adrian et al. (2011) of the past 35 years of research around emotion regulation revealed that observation, as a data collecting method, was predominantly used with infants and toddlers whilst self-reporting was used mainly with older children and adolescents. Therefore this research took an emancipatory approach. The researcher wanted to move away from a view that children's needs and wants are interpreted by the adults around them who speak for the children. Instead it aimed to view children as a group within their own right rather than simply being part of a family or care facility (Roberts-Holmes, 2005).

> The starting point in developing such a participatory [and emancipatory] research culture is to creatively and respectfully listen to young children. (Roberts-Holmes, 2005, p.126).

Previous research has shown that one of the key mechanisms to improve children's outcomes lies within early intervention and the high quality provision of day care (Day, 2010). The focus for this research is on how early years practitioners can modulate and extend emotional arousal in a way that children find most helpful. The methodology employed fits with the researcher's critical realist position because it has been originally devised to make visible the voices of the least powerful members of the community, as a catalyst for change (Clark, 2005). Qualitative research enables the voices of participants to be heard (Greig et al., 2007). The Mosaic framework also implies competency: children are the experts in their own lives and are able to express themselves using a combination of visual and verbal tools (Clark & Moss, 2001, Clark, 2005). Moreover, recognising children's competencies can help the adults reflect on their assumptions and limitations of their understanding of children's lives and skills (Clark & Moss, 2001).

3.2 The Research Questions

The research was qualitative in design and answered the following questions:

1. What are children's perspectives on factors that influence their emotion regulation?

2. What methods do young children find helpful in allowing them to express their views on emotion regulation?

3.3 The Mosaic Approach

The Mosaic approach was chosen as this study's methodology because it represents an effective way of integrating children's creative responses to their experiences and environment (Clark & Moss, 2001, Roberts-Holmes, 2005). The Mosaic approach is a qualitative framework that combines the visual with the verbal as ways of meaning-making through which young children are able to explore and express their views and experiences (Clark, 2011).

The Mosaic approach (Clark & Moss, 2001) is:

- *multi-method:* the use of more than one method of data collection – triangulation of data – addressed threats to the trustworthiness of this research design (Mertens, 2005; Robson, 2011)
- *participatory:* children are viewed as experts and agents in their own lives. The framework recognises both the children's rights to express themselves or to remain silent.
- *reflexive:* both children and adults co-constructing the reality but with the children at the centre.
- *adaptable:* applied in a variety of early years institutions ranging from nurseries, children's centres to refugee centres. The important issue is to find many ways in which children can express themselves but the

methods employed could be considered in light of different gender or cultural competencies.

- *focused on children's lived experiences*
- *embedded into practice:* the framework has the potential for an evaluative tool and can be applied into early years practice as a way of improvement (Clark & Moss 2001, Clark, 2005).

Furthermore, listening to children is seen as an integral part of an Educational Psychologist (EP)'s role and the Mosaic approach (Clark & Moss, 2001) proposed as a methodological tool is giving the EPs the possibility of listening to young children without imposing an adult's agenda to it (Mercieca & Mercieca, 2014).

The researcher identified a number of studies employing the Mosaic methodology but none in relation to the field of emotion regulation. Nonetheless, giving an example of such study will aid understanding of the Mosaic methodology and its application in research. The following study was chosen because it was an UK study carried out by a TEP, adopted a critical realist perspective and involved similarly age children taking part in the research.

Day (2010) conducted a UK study aiming to listen to young children's views on their experience of day care in Children's Centres but also to gather the children's views on how these experiences can be improved. Six young children, aged between 20 months and four years participated in the study, which was ethnographic in nature and adopted a critical realist perspective – children's experiences in day care could be attributable to the arrangements made for their day care by the adults around them. Data was collected through a Mosaic Approach including observations of children in the settings, interview schedules with parents and carers, interviews and questions with the more verbal children, role play with the children who could not take part in interviews, children taking the researcher on tours of the nursery, children taking photos of the thigs they enjoyed and that were important to them and noting the children's responses, and suing the same photographs, map making of places in nursery that made children happy or sad. An inductive thematic analysis was used to analyse the data and findings revealed that children found important the

relationships and interaction with responsive, available adult, support and relationships with other children attending nursery, showed strong preferences for their play and learning activities and appeared to enjoy and be happy in the nursery. As most children had favourite adults in nursery, the analysis revealed some interesting findings relating to the nature of the relationships between nursery staff and the children in their care with an emphasis on attachment theory. Moreover, the researcher, a trainee educational psychologist, used the findings to devise a methodological guide for EPs to use when looking at engaging and listening to young children. The researcher also pointed a gap in EPs providing services to day care settings (Day, 2010).

The Mosaic approach is so named because it integrates a combination of data to form a 'living picture' of children's experiences (Clark & Moss, 2001). Methods employed as pieces of the mosaic were chosen to support young children's meaning making (Clark, 2011).

Pieces of the mosaic the researcher collected for this research were:

- children's drawings and videotaped discussions between researcher and each child around their drawings in response to researcher's verbally given scenarios (see Appendix 6 for more details). The researcher was not interested in the quality of the drawing output but rather looked at the drawings in the context of the recorded conversations with the children whilst they were drawing (Duncan, 2013) ;
- dialogue and non-verbal communication in response to researcher's narrated story stems, videotaped during play scenarios using miniature animal characters - family of cats including three generations (see Appendix 7 for more details);
- photos that children took of places and objects around nursery that made them happy, angry or sad and audiotaped conversations between the researcher and individual children around the child's own photos.

See section 3.6 for further details of how the data was collected. All the pieces of the Mosaic were gathered before the data analysis was started. In choosing the right qualitative analytical method the researcher has considered the research purpose and philosophy.

3.4 Participants

Participants were typically developing young children with English as a first language and no known special educational needs. They were aged, at the start of data collection, between three years and five months and four years and one month old. Purposive sampling was used to recruit seven participants.

Initial discussions took place between the researcher and the Head Teacher of the nursery school at the start of the Autumn term – September 2015. The researcher made it clear what was the purpose of the research and the criteria for selecting participants: typically developing children, with English as a first language and no known special educational needs. The new nursery intake children were due to have a gradual start over a two week period. Following this, during a new meeting mid-September, the researcher invited the Head Teacher, in consultation with nursery teachers, to select an initial sample of children that were going to be invited to take part in the study. Following a two week period of classroom observations, carried out by the nursery staff on the new nursery intake children, invitation letters were sent out at the end of September. The children's invitation letters for this research were set out as story boards to make them more accessible to young audiences. Parents were invited to read them to their children together with the consent forms.

Invitation letters together with consent forms (see Appendix 4 and 5) were sent out to about 20 children who attended the nursery school and their parents. The researcher selected participants from the parent and child consent form returns (purposive sampling) based on the criteria for selection. The opportunity to contact the researcher for further information and/or questions was available to parents and participants throughout the study. Moreover, the Head Teacher offered to discuss with parents and carers at any stage of the study.

Following consultation of several recent doctoral theses to look at the employed methodology when carrying out research with young children, it was interesting, and in some cases inspiring, to note samples of invitation to participate in

research and consent letters addressed to young children (Duncan, 2013; Hall, 2010; Maconochie, 2013), or their lack of (Redfern, 2011; Walsh, 2013). It was interesting to see other researchers' decision about whether to write to the children themselves and invite them to take part in the study, in addition to sending invitation letters for the parents. This review of methodologies coupled with feedback received from the Head Teacher led to the story board format of the children's invitation letters.

Seven parental and children consent forms were returned agreeing to take part in this research. The initial sample of participants comprised of 5 girls and 2 boys between three and four years of age. There was one participant from a mixed race ethnic background and the remainder were all White British. Despite initial consent, one girl refused to take part in the first two data collection activities so was consequently dropped from the initial research sample. So the final sample consisted of 4 girls and 2 boys.

3.5 Ethical considerations

As the research aimed to gather the young children's views, there were a number of ethical issues. The issues centred around informed consent and the children's own agency in participation, as well as how the researcher aimed to address the power imbalance in research.

University of East London (UEL) School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee gave approval for the research in May 2015, prior to any recruitment of participants (See Appendix 3 for a copy of the UEL ethical approval). The research project was also discussed in the Local Authority in which the study had been carried out and permission to undertake research was granted. The researcher had attended 'Safeguarding children: Level 2' training as part of her professional role and had an enhanced DBS check.

It is important to recognise that children's participation in research is "controlled by a hierarchy of gatekeepers" (Powell & Smith, 2009, p.125) that include parents, carers and teachers as well as various professionals and research

committees. Despite increasingly recognising the children's abilities to participate in decisions affecting their lives, it is mainly the parents / carers who weigh out the potential benefits or risks associated with participation in research, particularly for young children where there might be an assumption that they are unable to understand these risks/benefits (Coyne, 2010). Therefore without parental cooperation and consent children cannot take part (Coyne, 2010; Powell & Smith, 2009) and in some cases "the decision to include or exclude children can be made without children even knowing about the research" (Powell & Smith, 2009, p.126). Interestingly, one could assume that the informed consent for young children starts after the parental gatekeeping is open. Perhaps, in some cases, we are yet to achieve a co-construction of the decision around participation.

Informed consent implies: "(…) the freedom to decide about participation, the clarity of the information about the study and the decision making capacity" (Coyne, 2010, p.228). Informed consent was sought from all the children and their parents/carers before the beginning of their participation in the study (please refer to Appendices 4 and 5 for invitation and consent letters). After the information letters were sent out, the children were provided with an opportunity to ask any questions, via their parents, or delay their decision about the participation. One parent contacted the researcher via email and enquired whether she could have copies of the transcripts involving her child once the data collection had ended. The researcher explained to the parent that such access would breach not only the child's confidentiality, something that all children were assured of in their consent letters, but it was also deemed unethical. The researcher also offered re-assurance that findings from the research would be shared with children and parents, however, children's anonymity would have to be preserved. Having an open dialogue helped clarify issues around methodology and data collection and agreement to take part in research was later given by this parent.

Staff at nursery also received copies of the letters sent out to parents and participants. In accordance with the British Psychological Society (BPS) code of ethics and conduct, the purpose of the research was explained, the researcher's role in the research, the way the researcher intended to collect

data: i.e. when the researcher intended to use photos or video the discussion around play scenarios. The researcher kept a record of how and when consent was obtained.

Consent was sought directly from each child, but treated as conditional, and based upon the child's desire to participate, expressed either verbally or non-verbally (Duncan, 2013). At the beginning of each data collection session the researcher asked the children if they were aware of the purpose of the activity for the day and whether they were still happy to take part.

This research project did not involve deception. In communication with the children the term "emotion regulation" was replaced with "what can adults do to make the child / you feel a bit better, or keep the child / you feeling happy for longer?" These terms were used interchangeably in the context of this study and the latter formulation was more accessible to the children. The invitation letters also specified that:

- Children had the right to withdraw from the research at any stage without disadvantage to them;
- Children were not obliged to give the reason for their withdrawal;
- Children, through their parents, could request for their data to be destroyed before the beginning of data analysis (18th December 2015, at that point the end of Autumn term).
- The meaning of the word withdraw was clearly explained.
- When the audio recordings were to be transcribed the real names were to be replaced with pseudonyms.
- All data was stored on a password-protected computer that no one apart from the researcher had access to. Children were made aware that the researcher's supervisor had access to the anonymised transcripts of the interviews.
- The audio recordings, names and contact details were going to be destroyed at the end of the study (August 2016).
- The transcripts would be stored for three years after the study was completed (August 2019).
- The feedback and reports on the findings would not include any personal

details that could identify individuals or schools (e.g. names, location, role in the school or life circumstances).

The children were engaged in conversations around adults' role in their emotional regulation through the medium of play, drawing and media. It was not expected that these conversations, between researcher and individual children, would provoke strong emotional responses. However there was always a chance that the children might have felt upset or uncomfortable during their participation in the research or became aware of something they were not aware of before. In addition to the children's right to give or withdraw consent at any point during the data collection, the researcher was extremely sensitive to the mood and behaviour of the children in order to pick up on the children's cues and react accordingly. The researcher stressed that the children had the choice to opt out at any point and could express that using a variety of means, from simply saying no, to gestures and even by using a traffic light fan as consent signs ('Green smiley face' for yes/wish to take part and 'Red sad face' for no/do not wish to take part); See Appendices – consent letters, for an example.

For the ethical reasons discussed above, a member of the nursery staff, someone the children were familiar with, was present during data collection for most of the research activities. At times they were assisting the researcher with the data collection but mostly they were there to provide a secure base (Bowlby, 2005). At the end of each individual session, the children were debriefed to gauge how they found the process, mostly as part of the semi-structured interview mentioned earlier (See also Appendix 8 for more details). As part of the risk assessment included with the proposal for this research, plans were made in case of any emotional reaction by the children in response to the research activities. However, no such situations occurred. Moreover, towards the end of the data collection children felt much more relaxed, most of them did not need their key workers to sit with them during the last research activity.

Considerable weight was given to the ethical issues around using photos and videos, the storage of data and what would be done with the findings. Great care was given so that only children who had consented to take part in the

research featured in any photos or videos. A way of achieving this was to request a quiet space where data could be collected from individual children on a one-to-one basis. This was a room already known to the children as other individual or small group activities, part of the nursery provision, would take part there during the week. The researcher was also realistic of the practicalities of working in a nursery / school settings and of the fact that flexibility and willingness to change space for data collection was also necessary (Rix, 2014).

Each child was given a pack with their own photos and copy of the drawings they completed during the research together with a thank you letter outlining what would happen next. Once completed, all the children will be sent a letter outlining the main findings, written in a language they will understand.

3.6 Procedures for data collection:

Children have diverse and creative modes of expression: through drawing, movement, collage, music, role play, painting, sculpture, that do not primarily involve language. Therefore, “listening to the ‘voice of the child’ needed to be a process open to the many creative ways children expressed their views and experiences” (Roberts-Holmes, 2005, pp. 128). The procedures for data gathering using the Mosaic approach, thus, needed to be rich and qualitative in nature.

All children taking part in the research were seen individually by the researcher on three occasions. At each of these sessions one of the three research activities was carried out. Drawing and talking was the first research activity followed by playing with the cat characters and finally taking photographs. For all data collection activities, the children were able to be accompanied by their key worker who remained in the room to provide a secure base and reassurance when needed. Some children did not need their key workers present for the last research activity. Occasionally the key workers encouraged the children to take part or elaborate on their answers. One child, Rose, in particular needed more prompting and facilitation from her key worker during the first research activity. When Rose was asked to imagine a child just like her whose birthday was that day, she needed prompting from her key worker to

start the conversation:

> Researcher: now, Rose, can you imagine a child just like you whose birthday is today… and can you draw what that child is doing … on their birthday?
> Rose [pause] [Rose continues to draw her picture]
> Key worker: we had a birthday in X group yesterday, didn't we Rose?
> Rose [pause] [Rose nods affirmatively]
> Researcher: hmm, that's interesting…
> Key worker: it was H's birthday yesterday so maybe you can think about what H was feeling on her birthday.

All children were asked if they still wished to take part and if they were comfortable with the sessions being video and audio taped. Each research activity was carried out with all children before moving to the next one.

The researcher collected the data over a period of between 11 weeks, between September and November 2015. This time was required for the selection of participants and for obtaining consent, as well as to allow for the children's various attendance schedule. Only one participant was attending the nursery full time, the others were either attending the morning or afternoon sessions

3.6.1 Activity 1: Drawing and talking

The researcher started data collection with the drawing and talking activity as it was the activity that resembled most a typical nursery activity. Most children engage with drawing at some point during the day, drawing and mark making is an important Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) activity, readily available to children on a daily basis (DfE EYFS handbook, 2016).

> Cognitively, drawing is thought in action and is a rich way of thinking, of knowing and of exploring the world 'out there' through the intellect and the senses. Affectively, drawing and painting are ways for children to explore and learn about their feelings (Roberts-Holmes, 2005, p. 136).

Gibson et al. (2010) carried out a study involving 38 children and young people (10 children aged 4 – 5 years old, 17 children aged 6 – 12 years old) at different

stages of their cancer treatment in three different Cancer Treatment Centres in UK. It aimed to explore the views and experiences of the children and young people's cancer care and to present a conceptual model of communication and information sharing that moved beyond seeking the views of parents as proxies. The study wanted to challenge the assumption that children are passive recipients of health care system rather than active users (p.1398); and the research was qualitative, exploratory and employed participatory-based techniques of data collection. Play and puppets was employed with 4 and 5 year olds and children were asked to talk to a familiar doll character (Tweenie) and explain to the doll some of their cancer care experiences (i.e.: what was like having their medicine, what was their hospital room like and whether they felt worried while in hospital). Draw and write technique was employed with 6 to 12 year olds. The children were prompted to do some drawings at the start of their interview session with the researcher and then asked to talk about their drawings, with more questions asked about their experiences in hospital alongside. An inductive thematic analysis of data generated six main themes around hospital environment; medication and having treatment; age appropriate activities and keeping up with school work; being asked and told about their treatment directly by hospital staff; worries about present and future and the role of family, friends and hospital staff. For young children, their parents represented the most important people when is hospital and some missed seeing their friends and siblings. All children recognised their parents' support and also appeared concerned about their parents' well-being whilst in hospital. (Gibson et al., 2010, p.1403).

All the children taking part in the research carried out the drawing and talking activity. Children were provided with a choice of white or coloured blank pieces of paper, crayons and pencils (with a triangular grip). They were asked to imagine a child just like them experiencing three distinct emotionally charged situations:

1. A child on his/her birthday (Happy);
2. A child at the start of the first day at a new school (Anxious)
3. A child experiencing his/her favourite toy taken away by another child whilst playing at nursery (Angry).

The children were then asked to draw what that imagined child would do and think. During the drawing process the researcher asked the children more questions: How is the child feeling? Who is around; any grown-ups? What can they do to make this child feeling like this for a bit longer?/ a bit better? (See also Appendix 6).

Some children needed more prompting than others but the researcher aimed to be sensitive and allow children time to reflect and gather their thoughts as well as time to finish their drawing ("draw what that child is doing and thinking about" – see Appendix 6). Encouraging the child's free narrative was seen as supporting "the building of rapport and most likely to elicit a more complete story" (Cameron, 2005, p.603). Each child participant spent between 16 and 35 minutes with the researcher for this activity. All children except one, produced three different drawings in response to the researcher's prompts (See Findings for a sample. The rest of the drawings are included in the CD in Appendix 12).

Some children were also very precious about their drawings and wanted to take them away straight away:

> Researcher: you know what I'm going to do with these [drawings] Jasmine?
> Jasmine: no
> R: I am going to make copies of them so that you can have some to take home…
> J: I can have these three ones and can have a four one…to take home
> R: you can do a fourth one and you can take that home straight away…
> J: well I want…
> R: and then with these I'm going to put them in that machine called photocopier and I'm going to copy them and I can keep some and you can have some…
> J: … but.. but I want those ones as well and this one…

The researcher accompanied the children and their key worker to the nursery school office and made photocopies to be kept for the research's purpose whilst children kept their original drawings.

3.6.2 Activity 2: Playing with the cat characters

The play scenarios followed the talking and drawing activity (See Appendix 7 for details on the prompts given to each participant). These play scenarios were little vignettes, designed by the researcher, and aimed to depict a situation that would generate a feeling in the little cat children: happy, anxious and angry, based on the circumstances they were experiencing.

Storytelling and narrative approaches are regarded as a useful research tool for engaging young children because it enables the children to talk about, and explore, their feelings in an engaging way. Stories are seen as a window into young children's thinking about a wide range of issues (Mukherji & Albon, 2015). Furthermore, story stems are well established assessment tools in the area of attachment and aim at exploring the child's representations of parents and care giving. As seen in the previous chapter, a large number of the studies reviewed employed narrative techniques as part of the research methodology – Cole eta l., 2009; Davis et al., 2010; Dennis & Kelemen, 2009; Oppenheim et al., 1997; Nives Sala et al., 2014.

Each child was told the same three stories that had been introduced in the first research session with this time the introduction of the cat characters. Each vignette also specified which other characters were present with the little cat boy or girl. After setting the scene, each child was encouraged to show what could happen next. Similarly with the previous research activity, some children needed more prompting than others to carry on the play scenarios ("show me what happens next" - See Appendix 7)

The children used the cat figurines as a way of exploring what the matching gender little cat character would do in an emotionally charged situation. In other words, all girls were asked to imagine what a little girl cat would do. It was interesting to note that the boys seemed very careful about touching the cat characters. Leon preferred to give the researcher instructions on how to move and arrange the characters, although he did, briefly, touch them directly. Max also preferred, at times, for the researcher to move the characters whilst he was talking. Another child chose to remain silent for most of this session but

engaged in the play.

The children were asked open questions by the researcher: How is little boy / girl cat feeling? What can the grown up cats do to make little cat feel like this for a bit longer / to make little cat feel better again?

Each child spent between 15 and 33 minutes on this activity with the researcher in a separate interview room.

3.6.3 Activity 3: Taking photos in nursery

The final data collection sessions focused on the children taking photographs in the nursery of objects and places that would make them happy, anxious or angry. Reviewing three research projects which involved children using cameras, Cook and Hess (2007), summarise key benefits of using such methodologies in engaging children in research: using cameras is an engaging strategy for children with acceptable results being produced even by young children; through using cameras young children are in control of what they take pictures of, consequently, the photos are likely to reflect children's own interests and concerns; using photographs is a more tangible strategy than direct interviewing, particularly when the topic under research is complex or abstract; photographs act as a reminder, a sort of visual prompt that enables revisiting topics for discussion at a later date (Cook & Hess, 2007, p. 32). The study by Harden (2012), discussed in the Literature Review chapter, involved a multi-method approach to data collection including the use of photographs that children took as a basis for discussion around children's emotional expression.

The researcher showed the children how to use the camera to take photos and also reminded them not to take photographs of other children or adults. It was explained to the children that should they take photographs of other children or adults in the nursery setting, those photos could not be included in the subsequent conversations and would be deleted. It was important to make them

aware that some children might not have liked to have photos of themselves taken by others (Roberts-Holmes, 2005) and also the other children would have not had consented to taking part in the research either. The researcher accompanied the children, around the nursery and outdoor play areas, whilst they were taking photos. Once the children indicated they finished taking pictures, the camera was downloaded on to a laptop computer to allow photos to be viewed on a larger screen. The children were then asked to talk about the photographs and explain their choices. The photos were also used to start a conversation around emotions and the role adults played in keeping children happy in nursery.

3.6.4 Ending the sessions

At the end of each data collection session each child was also asked general questions about how they found the session and more specific relating to that particular activity – what was helpful or unhelpful about it. Children were also asked to compare the different activities and choose the one they liked best. These questions formed a semi-structured interview, used by the researcher to answer the second research question relating to which method the children found most helpful in gathering their views (See Appendix 8 for more details).

At the end the data collected comprised of: 18 audio recording, 12 video recordings, 16 children's drawings produced during the draw and talk sessions and 147 photographs that the children took during their short journeys through nursery (See Appendix 9 for a breakdown of data collected for each child participant).

3.7 Data analysis

All recordings with the children were saved anonymously and the researcher transcribed each video and audio recording. Pseudonyms were assigned for each participant during transcription. Recordings lasted between 15 and 35 minutes (See Appendix 9 for a breakdown of data collection). For the draw and

talk and play with the cat family sessions, each video recording was listened up to three times to produce a data transcript and ensure that the transcript accurately reflected the data collected. The audio recordings of the third research activity – children taking photographs in nursery, were also listened to three times. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim whilst video transcriptions offered a description of what the child was doing at that point in the session.

It is worth noting some of the conventions used for transcribing. Ellipses indicate pauses in the narrative and when used in square brackets they indicate words omitted for brevity and relevance. Words added in square brackets either explain omitted words by the speaker, indicate a long pause, or are nouns used to protect anonymity, for instance [name of town] (Lowther, 2013). Transcripts for the video recordings include separate columns for the verbal and visual data transcribed and also give an indication of the timings and length of recording transcribed. When used in transcript extracts quoted in this paper, explanations in square brackets contain visual transcription of data. Please see Appendix 11 for samples of transcripts for each of the research activities; the rest of the transcripts were included in the CD (Appendix 12).

Thematic analysis guided by the principles set out in Braun & Clarke (2006), (2014) was carried out on the qualitative data described above. The analysis was predominantly an inductive process for both research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to ensure the voice of the child was heard and themes emerged from what the children said (Joffe, 2012). Inductive themes emerged in relation to the role adults play in the children's emotion regulation as seen by the children themselves.

The researcher scrutinised all the data (Joffe, 2012) to find the relevant parts to answer each research question. A complete coding approach to data was employed in order to, as Braun & Clarke (2014) state:

> (…) Identify anything and everything of interest and relevance to answering the research questions within entire data set. (Braun & Clarke, 2014, p.206 - 207)

The thematic analysis was conducted mainly at a “latent or interpretative level” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.84) whereby the production of themes involved a degree of interpretation. Interpretation by the researcher was necessary in some cases also to avoid being dismissive of the children’s replies, for instance cast them as illogical or nonsense. However, some semantic themes were used alongside the interpretive ones (Fereday & Muir – Cochrane, 2006), whereby themes summarised what children said.

Through not having a pre-existing coding frame or set themes the analysis of data relevant to the first research question will have been influenced by the researcher’s own interests and understanding of emotion regulation as related to attachment theory. It was recognised that:

> Researchers cannot free themselves of their theoretical and epistemological commitments, and data are not coded in an epistemological vacuum. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.84)

However, it is possible for the researcher to have knowledge of previous findings in the area researched but yet to remain open to new knowledge that emerges from the analysis (Joffe, 2012)

Thematic analysis was the chosen method for analysing the data because it provided freedom and flexibility. Freedom from any theoretical framework, in other words thematic analysis is compatible with a variety of ontological positions, and flexible, because it allowed the researcher to:

- acknowledge the ways children made meanings of their experience of adults helping with their emotion regulation;
- consider which method of data gathering was most useful in gaining young children’s views;

- consider the way the broader social and cultural context, and in this study by context it is meant the children's family and nursery experiences, influenced those meanings;
- retain focus on the data, reflect on it but also unravel the reality of emotion regulation for the children participating in this study as it was expressed by the children themselves (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Data analysis began right from the start of the data collection process (Silverman, 2011). The researcher kept written records and reflective diaries of ideas and potential coding themes right from the start (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Roberts-Holmes, 2005).

> Analysis involves a constant moving back and forward between the entire data set, the coded extracts of data that you are analysing, and the analysis of the data that you are producing. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp.86)

The analysis followed the six phases of analysis outlined by Braun & Clarke, 2006. These were that the researcher:

1. Familiarized herself with the data collected: transcribed, read and re-read, wrote ideas in the research diary;
2. Generated initial codes: coded interesting features of data in a systematic manner, collated data relevant to each code (See Appendix 10 for a list of codes for key themes);
3. Searched for themes: collated codes into potential themes, grouped data relevant to each potential theme;
4. Reviewed and refined themes: checked if the themes matched the coded extracts, considered whether they appeared to form a coherent pattern, created new ones, refined, separated or discarded some of the themes if need be; considered the validity of each individual themes in relation to the whole data set (See Findings section for a thematic map);
5. Defined and named themes: ongoing analysis to refine each theme and the overall story the analysis seemed to reveal; generated clear definitions and names for each theme (See Findings);

6. Produced the report: a final opportunity for analysis, selected compelling extracts from the data set; related back the findings of the analysis to the research questions and literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This last aspect will be detailed in the last chapter of this paper (See Discussion).

Data was looked for each research question separately. First, data was scrutinised for themes around the perceived role of adults in children's own emotion regulation – what did the children report more of, what was helpful or unhelpful for adults to do as reported by children? The second thematic analysis looked at what children identified as the most helpful way in engaging with them and getting their views.

3.8 Reliability and validity of the research

The Mosaic approach employed more than one method of data collection. This contributed to the triangulation of data thereby addressing threats to the trustworthiness of this research design (Braun & Clarke, 2014; Mertens, 2005; Robson, 2011). As mentioned earlier, the data collected included audio and video recordings of children engaged in three different research activities, drawings and photos that children took in nursery. As a critical realist, the researcher employed different methods in pursuit of reality and this triangulation of data led to concurring findings about reality – in this instance, emotion regulation and the role of adults within it as experienced and reported by children (Robson, 2011).

First two data collection session were both video and audio recorded, as they were carried out on a 1:1 basis in a separate interview room. The last research activity, since it involved taking pictures in nursery, was audio recorded only. From the points of trustworthiness of the research data, using digital means to record data, in either visual or audio format, this adequately addressed issues around inaccuracy or incompleteness of data (Robson, 2011). Validity was increased by video and audio taping, taking good quality notes and having a clear outline of the steps taken to analyse and interpret the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Robson, 2011).

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, both audio and video recordings were listened to up to three times to ensure the data was accurately reflected in the transcript. Repetition of viewing and seeing the data also provided an essential beginning for data analysis – the familiarisation with data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2014). These transcripts were laborious to produce because they also contained transcription of the visual data - extremely helpful when the child provided no verbal responses but the non-verbal communication or silent play captured on video, offered important data to support the verbal transcript. Transcription of the visual data also ensured that the voice of the child who was not verbal was not lost in analysis thus ensuring comprehensiveness, depth of response and representation (Mukherji & Albon, 2015).

Providing a traceable route to how the researcher intended to analyse the data has further addressed issues around trustworthiness of the analysis. The research diary and fieldwork notes provided an audit trail of the steps taken in collecting and analysing this study's data (Robson, 2011).

The Mosaic approach and the use of the three activities provided comprehensive data on the children's views on emotional regulation. These were carefully and thoughtfully analysed to allow a rich, intricate and complex picture to emerge of how children view adults, and others, to support their emotional development. These findings are laid out in the next section.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter will present the findings of the present research study and demonstrate that young children are able to express their views but perhaps, not always in the straightforward manner we would expect from older typically developing children. These findings demonstrate that to make sense of how children communicate their experiences one really has to be open to the hundred languages children speak (Malaguzzi, cited in Clark & Moss, 2001)

The purpose of this exploratory research was to understand the emotion regulation experience of young children, aged three to four, attending nursery school. It aimed to reveal children's perspectives on emotion regulation and in particular on the way the children report adults' involvement in the children's emotion regulation. A multi-method and emancipatory approach to data collection, offered by the Mosaic approach, revealed unique insights into these six children's lived experiences.

The research was qualitative in design and aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are children's perspectives on factors that influence their emotion regulation?

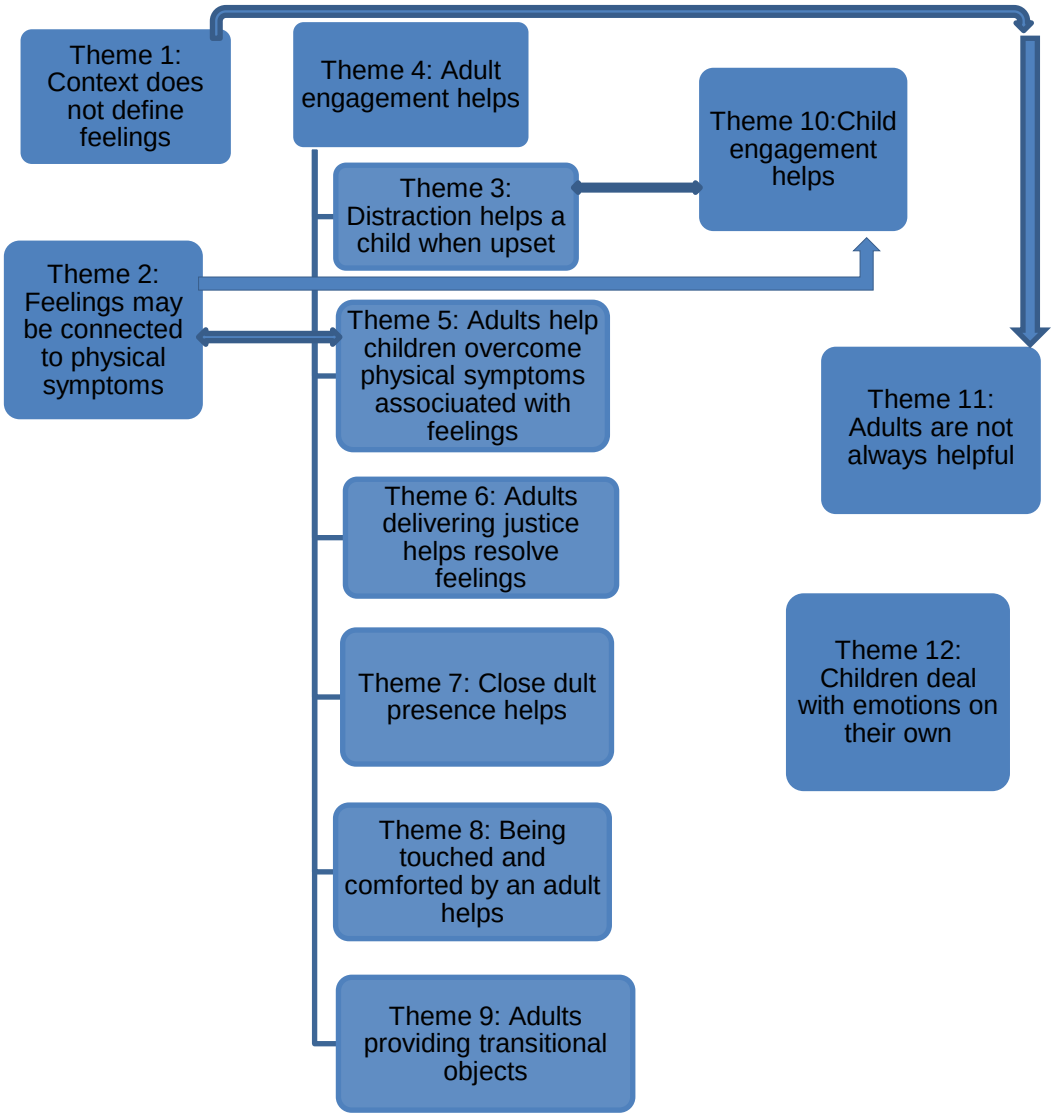
2. What methods do young children find helpful in allowing them to express their views on emotion regulation?

4.1. First research question: What are children's perspectives on factors that influence their emotion regulation?

To answer the first research question data was scrutinised for themes around the perceived role of adults in children's own emotion regulation – what did the children report more of, what was helpful or unhelpful for adults to do as reported by children? The first set of data analysed was from the draw and talk scenarios. Themes from each of the children were identified separately before being amalgamated to make a set of key themes. Each subsequent set of data

(i.e.: playing with the cat family scenarios and from taking photos activity) was analysed in a similar way. As the analysis progressed through the whole data set, new key themes were added to the ones already identified or the existing ones, enriched with new examples from transcripts.

Figure 4.1: Themes relating to the first research question: What do young children report adults do to support the children's emotion regulation and what are children's perspectives on factors that influence their emotion regulation?



The decision to analyse the data by considering and grouping the themes around each research activity rather than by looking at each child across all data set was taken with both research questions in mind. For the second research question it was important, right from the start, to look at the themes emerging from each research activity carried out by the children.

For the draw and talk and the play with the cat family sessions only the video recordings were used for the purpose of data analysis. In addition, the analysis included transcripts of the conversations the researcher had with the children before and after each child participant took photos around the nursery. The research diary and field notes taken at the end of each research day spent in nursery also fed into the data analysis. These notes provided important "noticings – memory aids and triggers for developing the analysis" (Braun & Clarke, 2014, p. 205).

In answering the first research question, ultimately, the researcher was interested more in what the children had to say whilst engaged in the drawing activity rather than the quality and the contents of the drawings themselves. The research here was about emotion regulation rather than drawing skills. Drawings became important if they were aiding meaning making and expression, but they were not a focus on themselves. The importance or relevance of drawing, as a method of data collection, will be discussed later in this chapter.

4.1.1 The context does not define the feelings

The research shows that children do not necessarily relate in a direct way their feelings to the context they are in. Children described their characters feeling a range of emotions on their birthdays – not just happy as an adult would probably describe their emotions. Cherry took some time deciding on how her character will feel:

> Researcher: a child… OK…and how is this little girl feeling on her birthday?
> Cherry: [pause]
> R: is she happy, is she sad, is she worried… is she angry?
> C: [pause]
> R: is she excited?
> C: yeah
> R: which one is it?
> C: any
> R: any of them?
> C: [pause]
> R: OK…do you want to pick one to start with?... how is she feeling?
> C: OK, I think

R: OK, she's feeling OK…
C: yeah
R: OK … that's a good answer…
C: she's … she's just crying…

Whilst for Daisy, the child felt fine to start with then she started to feel sad and even scared:

Researcher: how is she feeling… on her birthday?
Daisy: fine
R: she's fine… Is she happy… is she sad… is she worried… is she frightened… is she scared?
D: [pause]
R: how is she feeling on her birthday?
D: [pause]
R: how do you think children feel when it's their birthday?
D: … sad?
R: they feel sad? OK… why would they feel sad?
D: because… they might be scared…
R: they might be scared…oh… of what?
D: [pause] of monsters

Similar to Cherry, Rose thought that children can be excited, happy and a bit worried on their first day at school:

Key worker: Yeah. And can you remember when you first came to [nursery name] how did you feel?
Rose: Excited.
Key worker: Excited.
R: Excited.
Key worker: […] You were excited when you first came to [nursery name]?
Rose: Yes.
Key worker: Do you think everybody in Y group felt excited?
Rose: Yeah.
R: Yeah.
Key worker: Do you think anybody felt different?
Rose: (Inaudible).
Key worker: Or was everybody excited?
Rose: Everybody was excited.
R: Was anybody shy or a bit worried about their first day at school?
Rose: Happy and a bit worried.
R: And a bit...
Rose: ...worried.

Daisy thought children would be happy on their first day at school and Cherry thought they would be fine, even when the imaginary child did not know anyone in school. For Cherry, a range of emotions, experienced by the child character, was present in her story about a child whose favourite toy is taken away by

another peer whilst playing at nursery. In Cherry's story, the child character could feel both fine and sad in the same time. In Leon's story, the child character would feel both scared and sad when his favourite toy was taken away. Interestingly, Max did not report the imagined child feeling a range of emotions. When asked how the imagined child would feel in any given emotionally charged situation, Max answered with one emotion only: happy on his birthday, crying and upset on his first day at school and wanting mummy, again crying and upset when the toys were taken away.

4.1.2 Feelings may be connected to physical symptoms

Interestingly, some children, during their draw and talk session, expressed connections between emotions and physical symptoms. As we have seen with some of Cherry's story about an imagined girl who started school that day, a headache developed, her forehead was hurting whilst also feeling not so sure about starting school. Later on, the imagined girl started having a tummy ache and that was helped by the girl's mother who brought a healing telescope (possibly a stethoscope?). When talking about her character who played with her favourite toy at school, Daisy identified that toy as being a gingerbread man. In an attempt to avoid the toy being taken away by another child, the imagined girl ate it. When that failed, then the adults intervened by eating the teeth of the child who took the gingerbread man away from the character of Daisy's story, and later on those teeth fell out and got decayed anyway:

Researcher: what's her favourite toy by the way?
Daisy: errr… gingerbread man…
R: gingerbread man?... do you want to draw one?
D: … no…
R: no… OK…. has she got any other favourite toys?
D: no
R:no… just gingerbread man?
D: yeah…
R: OK… someone takes this gingerbread man… what if they eat it?
D: no
R: how would she going to take it back then?
D: errr…they will take off …
R: what will she do?
D: err… she would eat it…
R: she will eat it herself?

D: yeah…
R: OK… but what if she doesn't have a chance to eat it and someone takes it away?
D: errr… it will hide it…
R: she'll hide it….
D: [pause]
R: OK …let's say she didn't have enough time to hide it… [pause] so this other child takes the gingerbread man and eats it… how will the little girl feel?
D: [pause] sad
R: she will feel sad… and … how can the gown-ups help then?
D: they will take it out of their mouth…
R: they will take it out of their mouth… OK…
D: and … and they will [pause]… eat their teeth…
R: eat their teeth?... hmmm…
D: and then they'll all fall out…
R: they will all fall out…
D: and there will be broken…
R: they'll be broken… the teeth of the little girl or the teeth of the child that took the gingerbread away?...
D: who took the gingerbread man away.

For Jasmine, feeling tired was not helpful when going into woods with her parents. Jasmine chose to tell that story when asked to imagine a child just like her starting school that day:

Researcher: you said you were a bit scared to start with… a bit worried
Jasmine (stopped drawing and started rubbing her eye): I was bit more… bit more.. tired… when I was at the starting

The key theme was repeated by some children during the play with the cat characters session. Leon thought that the little boy cat did not want to go for his first day at school because he was poorly. Soon as the boy cat was given permission to stay at home, he became happy again:

Researcher: now this little cat is at home, it's his first day at school. Right. Mummy cat and daddy cat are helping him get ready. Now suddenly little cat starts crying (makes crying noise) and says: "I don't want to go to school"
Leon: what does he not want to go to school?
R: why… I don't know... it's his first day
L: the thing is that one is poorly
R: he's poorly…okay… show me what happens next what are mummy cat and daddy cat doing
L: erm… say… erm… "all right then, don't go to school then"
R: don't go to school… okay… who would say that?
L: mummy and daddy cat

R: mummy and daddy cat, okay “don’t go to school”… you can play with them too if you want…and how will little cat feel then?
L: happy

4.1.3 Distraction helps a child when upset

All children talked about the imagined child, in the draw and talk scenarios, doing something fun or engaging with adults to overcome certain emotions. For Cherry it was important that the imagined girl had a toy for her birthday and that the birthday party was organised for her so that she stopped crying:

Researcher: oh dear…and is she crying on her birthday as well?
Cherry: yeah… but she’s … she’s OK when she goes to her party…
R: oh, she’s OK when she goes to her party…that’s right… OK… and what…
C: she… she’s got her tiger…. (Cherry shows whiskers and stripes on her face and smiles)
R: she’s got her tiger….
C: and it’s stripy… (Cherry shows stripes on her shoulders)
R: it’s stripy…does that help her be happy or OK for her party?
C: OK for the party…

After being scared by a monster, the child in Daisy’s story would feel better if she had more food and cake. When Jasmine was asked to think of a child just like her who started school that day, she told me a story about a trip to the woods with her parents. Jasmine said she was not so sure about it when she went into the woods but when she came out she was fine. For her it was important to have mum and dad together doing things with her whilst out in the woods:

Researcher: right, this time let’s see if you can imagine a child just like you who starts a new school today
Jasmine: whoa… oh, well.. I’m gonna do this (picks up a pink crayon)
R: OK
Jasmine: I was walking in the woods (started playing with her hair)… but at the starting when I was going in there… I didn’t like the grass… so… so I cried lots but in the other end… where… where there was the woods… I was… I was much happier.. (stopped playing with her hair and started drawing with the pink crayon)
Researcher: oh, all right… so what happened in between going in to the woods and coming out of the woods that made you happier?
J (drawing with her crayon): it made me happier.. as what
R: was someone there with you?
J (continuing to draw with her crayon): yeah, mummy and daddy

R: mummy and daddy… OK…
J: yeah
R: so what did they do to make you feel happy from being sad when you went into the woods?
J: errr… got some leaves in the woods…
R: … they got some leaves for you?
J: no… leaves and mummy and daddy and me

Jasmine also thought the little girl cat could stop feeling sad, whilst getting ready for her first day at school, if she started skating instead of going to school. Similarly to Jasmine, when asked about to think about a child who started school that day, Max told a story about his younger brother who could not stop crying when he went to playgroup whilst Rose told me about having a new dress bought for her and bouncing on a trampoline. For Max's brother, it was important to have the adults in the setting helping him with his lunch and doing some fun activities with him, like painting with red paint:

Researcher: what about any grown-ups in the school, how do they help him to feel better?
Max: [pause] everything… makes [brother's name] last time cry…
R: oh, right, so he was really upset? […] so is this little boy feeling OK now or is he still sad and crying?
M: he's… when it was lunch time [brother's name] eat… first didn't eat his lunch and then he did eat his lunch… so that's what he did and he didn't with his lunch…
R: OK… anybody helped him feel better.. in school?
M: umm… umm… someone helped him make him eat… so…
R: OK… how did they do that?
M: [pause] I got a bubble picture and is on the wall …and it's got red paint on it and it's got my face on it… Mrs S … Mrs S bringed some paint and some red painting things…
R: OK… so doing fun things in school did it help this boy not feel sad anymore and cry?
M: right this… everything… I'm in [name of town] already… 'cause I … and… and… am… and I got a dinosaur balloon from the museum…

When it came to imagine a child whose toy is taken away by another child whilst playing at nursery, Jasmine reported adults could help the upset child by giving her an identical toy to play with or by giving her some cake. Daisy thought it would be a good idea for the child character to hide her toy away to avoid it being taken away. For Leon, it was important that the adults pulled funny faces to cheer up the child saddened by the loss of her toy. In his play with the cat characters, Leon thought the cat children would feel better and stop arguing over the one toy if the grown-ups in nursery gave each child a toy to play with.

4.1.4 Adult engagement helps

Children referred to adults a lot during their draw and talk sessions. Their stories around imaginary children in various emotionally charged situations, such as birthdays or first day at school, made plenty of references to adults, quite often unprompted by the researcher. Rose's younger sibling is tickled by her mother when feeling upset or pushed in the pram to stop him crying. Both Max and Jasmine spoke of their own families being present for their birthdays, right after they were prompted to think of children who were celebrating birthdays.

Other times adults were the brought into the story a bit later. For Daisy's little girl character, after being on her own and feeling scared by a monster on her birthday, all of the imagined child's family came in to help. The adults killed the monster, everyone had party food and then the adults face painted a monster on the little girl and put bones on her - all that to keep the little girl happy on her birthday. It was then the little girl's turn to scare other people away:

> Researcher: is it a monster family or is it her real family?
> Daisy: [pause] her own family…
> R: her real family…OK… and how will they help her?
> D: [pause] err…they'll kill the monster…
> R: they'll kill the monster… right…OK… then what else would they do to make her feel better on her birthday?
> D: [pause] they will give him lots of food
> R: lots of food… OK… like party food?
> D: [pause] she won't give him any cake
> R: no? To the monster or to the little girl?
> D: not to the monster…
> R: not to the monster… so the family will kill the monster… and the who's going to have all the food?
> D: [pause] errr [pause]…all of her family
> R: all of her family… and will the little girl have the food as well
> D: yeah…
> R: and what else would they do to make her feel better on her birthday?
> D: [pause] they will…. paint her face…
> R: paint her face? That's a brilliant idea… what would they paint on her face?
> D: err… they'll paint…a monster
> R: a monster on her face…oh…that's funny…. What else can they do to make her feel better?
> D: … put some bones on her…

R: put some bones on her…like a dress up costume?
D: [pause] yeah
R: OK… right… have you…
D: and she'll scare people with it…
R: she'll scare people with it… so she won't feel scared anymore but she'll scare other people
D: yeah…
R: yeah… and how is she after all this… you know… the monster has gone away… she's having all the food, she's having the face painted… how is she feeling now?
D: happy…

The same theme appeared in Daisy's play with the cat family. The little girl cat was happy on her birthday but a monster was present. Grandpa cat stomped on the monster then mummy cat showed everyone how to eat from the birthday cake. All characters then joined in with the feast and after finishing with the cake they all ate their clothes. Daisy claimed the characters liked eating their clothes and that kept them happy.

Being engaged with adults in doing fun activities was seen as helpful during birthday celebrations. For Cherry, it was important that adults played with the birthday child to keep her happy but also with the other children at the party. Going for a walk or playing in the garden, dancing with the birthday child to make her happy also showed up in Cherry's play with the cats characters. For Rose, it was important that teachers at nursery pull funny faces to keep the birthday child happy and bring out a special birthday cake to mark the occasion. For home celebrations, adult engagement was also important for Rose: having mum and dad doing exciting things with her, grandparents buying her presents and being there, all of her family going on special trips, such as the zoo, to mark the occasions and keep her happy. Being engaged with adults in making a birthday cake and decorating it with candles would keep little boy cat happy on his birthday in Leon's story:

Researcher: Yeah. They're all eating cake. How do you think little cat is feeling? You said...
Leon: ...Happy.
R: Happy. Okay. And what can mummy cat and daddy cat and the grandparents do to keep little boy cat happy?
L: Erm...make a birthday cake.
R: They made a birthday cake already. Can they...do they need to make another one?
L: why?

R: To, you know, if he wants to be happy for longer, he wants to be happy all day long. What can they do to make him happy for his birthday?
L: Pick some candles.

4.1.5. Adults can help children overcome the physical symptoms associated with feelings

When getting ready for the first day at school, it was important to have mum and dad there, though it was the mother that was mostly present in children's stories. After taking the little girl to her new school, in Cherry's story, the mother comes back to help her when feeling unwell. Interestingly, Cherry then brought some new characters in her story – the snail and the whale and a helpful yellow telescope, but ultimately it was the mother's presence and doings that helped the little girl feel better on her first days at school:

R: OK… so what can mummy do to help her feel better?
C: she's a doctor because… that's a whale…
R: OK…
C: with a snail on it tail…
R:OK , is mummy and a whale in the same time?
C: [pause] and this is his back…
R: OK … let's go back to E who is not feeling very well… can any grown-ups do anything to make her feel any better?
C: [pause] that is a snail…
R: a snail…
C: [pause] and mummy's gonna come…
R: but how is E's mummy going to make E feel better then?
C: but she… is going to be this half…
R: OK
C: it's going to be the half of the pink and the yellow… so the yellow is going to make her feel better… and that's going to be the telescope… so this big telescope… it's going to be the yellow telescope going round and round…

Cherry continued with this theme for her next story when asked to imagine a little girl whose favourite toy is taken away by another child. Initially the adults in nursery try and help by retrieving the toy but then the little girl's mummy appears, with the helpful yellow telescope (stethoscope?) and she helps her daughter feel better because this time the little girl had a tummy ache whilst feeling sad.

Jasmine mentioned being a bit tired when she was feeling not sure about her trip to the woods with her parents. Her mummy helped her feel better by picking some leaves:

> Researcher: you said you were a bit scared to start with… a bit worried
> Jasmine (stopped drawing and started rubbing her eye): I was bit more… bit more.. tired.. when I was at the starting
> Researcher: OK. You were a bit tired at the start. And then what happened?
> J (continuing to draw with her pink crayon): doing another one of these… and one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, nine… then I'm gonna do… daddy
> R: OK
> J (drawing): no it's mummy now…
> R: so what did mummy do to make this little girl better… to make her happy?
> J (finishing drawing): there… all done…
> R: what did mummy do?
> J: she picked some leaves…

In Leon's story, the little boy cat was crying and feeling poorly as he was getting ready for the first day at school but the character felt happy again once mummy and daddy cat allowed him to stay at home. When queried what else the mummy and daddy cat could do to make little boy cat feel better again, Leon thought a good idea would be to have another birthday party.

4.1.6 Adults delivering justice helps resolve feelings

In several of the children's stories, adults at nursery were justice deliverers and helped make the imaginary child feel better by retrieving the toy back after it was taken by another child:

> Researcher: OK and how is… how is this grow-n up going to help E stop feeling sad, because someone has taken her toy?
> Cherry: hum…
> R: what can they do?
> C: I think they can give the toy back to them

Daisy took the adult engagement a step further and grown-ups in her story also punished the offending child:

> Researcher: no?... err…any grown-ups, any teachers in school?
> Daisy: no
> R: no? …but if there are and they could help… what would they do?

D: errr… they will take all of the toys off…
R: whose toys?
D: errr…
R: hers or the person's who took it away from her?
D: the person who took it away from her…
R: OK, so the grown-ups will take the toy back?
D: yeah…
R: OK… and if they could help in other ways what would they do?
D: they will smack her …
R: they will smack the little… the other child?
D: yyyeah…

In her play with the cat characters, Daisy called upon the adult to make the little cat better after her fight over a toy with the other character. The grown-up cats first retrieved the toy back from the character that snatched it, and if the fighting continued, the grown-ups would next remove the children from the scene. For Leon, it was important that the adult cats in nursery intervened and told the little cat children to stop fighting. Next, Leon thought the adults could give each little cat a toy according to their gender, a car for the little boy cat and a tiger toy for the little girl cat, thus keeping everyone happy. Similarly to Leon, Jasmine also proposed that the adults, once they intervened to stop the fighting, could find another toy to give to the other little cat character.

When the little girl cat was arguing over a toy at nursery with little boy cat, Rose first made the two little cats bring the toy in front of the two grown-ups present, the little girl cat was pushed to the edge of the scene, the little boy cat played for a short while with the toy. Rose then moved one of the adult cats close to the little boy cat, made it look at him briefly then moved it next to little girl cat. Both adult and little girl cat characters come close to the other adult and all moved close to the little boy cat who was still playing with the toy that initially belonged to little girl cat. After allowing him to play a little longer, Rose made the little boy cat push the toy in the direction of the little girl cat.

4.1.7 Close adult presence helps – adult offering a safe base

Children spoke about close family members and relatives being present for birthdays; mums and dads helping them to get ready for their first day at school or taking them to school. Jasmine, Rose and Max spoke of having close family

members – mum and dad, and other relatives – grandparents and cousins, with them as being important for their happiness on their birthday:

> Key worker: What did your mummy do for your birthday Rose?
> Rose: Erm...I just had (inaudible) on my bike.
> Key worker: You had a bike?
> Rose: Yeah.
> Key worker: So did mummy buy you the bike for your birthday?
> Rose: Nanny did.
> Key worker: Oh, Nanny bought you a bike for your birthday.
> Rose: Granddad helped her carry it all the way home.
> Key worker: Wow that was helpful of him.
> Researcher: Wow that was lots of grownups helped you feel happy for your birthday, yeah. They bought you stuff. They did things with you. Who helped you ride your bike?
> Rose: Erm...I had it...I had a sticker on one. The other one at the zoo yesterday. I just had mummy and daddy and nanny and granddad.

For Max's younger brother nothing was helpful when starting his new preschool, he was happy only when back home with his mummy:

> Researcher: Max, imagine a boy just like you who is starting school today and it doesn't know anybody, how do you think…
> Max: [interrupting and saying brother's name]
> R: how do you think…
> M: last time [brother's name] was starting to cry a bit…when last time… and when it was this day [brother's name] didn't cry
> R: OK… so he cried because how did it feel?
> M: because he wanted to go back to his mummy…
> R: so he was a bit worried, a bit unsure, maybe… and who … what grown-ups were there with this boy?
> M: it was mummy taked [brother's name] to preschool
> R: OK, so what did mummy do to make this boy feel better?
> M: [pause] when he came back home, he was happy
> R: oh, right … but to go into school.. how did the grown-up help him?
> M: he taked [brother's name] to preschool… in the cars
> R: what about any grown-ups in the school, how do they help him to feel better?
> M: [pause] everything… makes [brother's name] last time cry…

Jasmine's play with the cats involved a lot of elaborated lining up of the characters. Whenever she was asked what could the grown-ups do to keep the little girl cat happy on her birthday, Jasmine went on to line up the characters in various formations around the little girl cat called Tiddles. Similar arrangements were applied whenever little girl cat needed to feel better whist getting ready for her first day at school or after returning back home. During his play, Max

seemed preoccupied with trying to fill the gap between the cat characters that were standing in a circle around the birthday cake. Max next suggested that the little boy cat would be kept happy if the grown-ups" *looked after to him*" and stayed with him on his birthday. Max also thought that mummy and daddy cat could help the little boy cat feel better whilst getting ready for his new school if they would allow the little cat to remain at home with them and play with his toys.

Rose spent just over 20 minutes playing with the cats and spoke very little. Her play involved the characters bumping into each other and standing close together in a circle for the little girl cat's birthday. When little girl cat was upset getting ready for her first day at school, Rose used daddy cat to push mummy cat close to the little girl cat, later characters propped each other up when one fell down, were stacked on top of each other, flying through the air together and even dancing – little girl cat with her daddy cat.

4.1.8 Being touched and comforted by an adult helps

In her draw and talk session, Jasmine described the child character starting school that day as the only child passenger in a train station but having both his mother and father present, with the boy character holding his father's hand, waiting to board the train:

> Researcher: is anybody going to a new school.. from these passengers?
> Jasmine (continuing to draw): this boy that I'm drawing now….
> R: OK… it's a boy you're drawing … is he going to a new school?
> J(continuing to draw): yeah
> R: on the train?
> J(continuing to draw): yeah…
> R: oh, all right… how does he feel?
> J(continuing to draw): one, two, three, four, five, six… fine…
> R: he's fine?
> J: yeah
> R: OK. Is he going by himself or with someone else?
> J(continuing to draw): with his daddy…
> R: oh, OK.. so he's going with his daddy…OK.. and what's daddy doing?
> J: waiting and he's holding his hand…
> R: holding his hand and making him feel better?
> J (continuing to draw): yeah… now it's a mummy next…
> R: oh there's a mummy next to the boy?
> J(continuing to draw): yeah.. as well…

It was in the playing with the cat characters sessions that this key theme emerged the most. It could have been perhaps because the play allowed for more details in children's stories. Cherry's little girl cat has a fall and a bump on her birthday and mummy cat offers her comfort to make her happy again:

> Cherry: ...That...bomp nearly made the little girl cat cry.
> Researcher: Oh dear. How come? Oh, what's mummy cat doing?
> C: She's making her happy. [Cherry is playing with little girl cat and mummy cat. Mummy cat is 'kissing' the little girl cat on her head and face]
> R: Oh, how is she making her happy?
> C: Cos she was saying...the Grandpa...big crash.
> R: So what's mummy cat doing to little girl cat?
> C: She's hugging her so daddy doesn't flop anymore. Daddy's up.

Jasmine's little girl cat after overcoming her upset and spending her first day at nursery wanted to return home to have her sleep together with mummy and daddy cat. Jasmine laid the three characters very close to each other with the little girl cat in the middle.

4.1.9 Adults providing transitional objects can help

Having toys, as a way of keeping the child character happy, sometimes appeared in children's stories during their draw and talk sessions. However, when playing with the cat characters, a lot more detail to the child's story was possible and transitional objects, as a way of comforting little cat children, featured more prominently. In Cherry's story, after crying whilst getting ready for the first day at her new school the little girl cat needed her baby cat toy to feel happy again:

> R: ...Yeah. Little girl cat starts crying. (Crying sound). "I don't wanna go to school". What happens next?
> C: The...the baby comes and so the baby makes her happy.
> R: How does the baby make her happy?
> C: Cos she's very sad and she...she doesn't want to go to school.
> R: Okay. What can mummy and daddy do then to make her feel happy?
> C: So they're going to choose green to make her happy. [Cherry has picked the smiley faces fan and is now unfolding it, singling out the green happy face.] […]

C: She's going to get happy. There we go baby happy again. There we go. She's going to be happy.
R: How are mummy and daddy making her happy?
C: Yep. Baby's gonna go in the car with her.

Jasmine named her little girl cat character Rose, and Jasmine thought Rose was sad and crying whilst getting ready for school because she did not have a lunch box or toys to take with her to school. Jasmine thought the grown-ups could help by bringing all Rose's toys to nursery so that she can play with all her toys there:

Researcher: ...Why do you think she's crying, how is she feeling, Rose?
Jasmine: Erm...sad because she doesn't have a lunch box or a toy to bring to nursery cos her school needs toys because they don't have any toys.
R: Okay. So she's feeling sad or something else?
J: She's feeling sad because she can't go to nursery because she needs toys.
R: She needs toys. Okay. How can the grownups help then because she has to go to nursery?
J: They can bring all the...her toys at nursery and then they have lots of toys to play with and they will get all her toys out . Then...then all the others ...this all these cats.

4.1.10 Child engagement helps

Some of the children, during the draw and talk sessions, spoke of other children being helpful when dealing with emotions. Cherry was the one taking the imaginary girl to school on her first day and later on, when the imaginary girl was not feeling very well, it was the girl's sister who was close by:

Researcher: now, Cherry, imagine a little girl just like you who is starting school today…
Cherry: I think it's E that's starting school…
R: it's E that's starting school… how does E feel?
C: she feels OK
R: she feels OK…right…and who's taking her to school?
C: hum… me…
R: oh, you are taking E to school… OK…are there any grown-ups with E as well?
C: no
R: no?
C: me and E are childs
[…]

Researcher: OK… but does E's mummy… OK, let's go back to E… does she ever feel worried about coming to school?
Cherry: [pause] ermm
R: you know… like she's not sure…
C: I think she does…
R: you know… like she's not sure about it…because she doesn't know anybody..
C: I think she does…
R: she does…
C: and she's got a forehead like that…
R: OK …
C: and her forehead is hurting…she's got clapping feet… at the end of her toes
R: OK… now…
C: her boy's go round and round on her toe… it's hurting her forehead… there…
R: oh right… so someone is going on her toe and it's hurting her forehead…
Cherry: and… this is… this is her sister… with only… that and that and that… because she is not feeling very well…

Cherry also thought it was important for her character's happiness that other children showed up at little girl's cat birthday party:

Cherry: The little girl needs more friends in her party cos she hasn't got enough friends in her party. She's only got grandma and grandpa.
Researcher: Yeah and mummy and daddy.
C: And mummy, daddy.
R: Okay. So she needs more friends?
C: Yeah.
R: Oh alright.
C: So there in the box...so she wants them now.
[…]
Researcher: How's little girl cat feeling now?
Cherry: She's feeling happy cos she's found a friend.

The same request came from Jasmine, who pointed out that there were not enough children for the little girl's cat birthday party. When Max's younger brother was upset because his toys were taken away, Max offered his brother his own toy to cheer him up:

Researcher: so what can mummy do, or any other grown-ups do to make the baby feel better?
Max: I taked a rabbit's truck home and [brother's name] really loved my rabbit's truck.. so that what made [brother's name] happy…
R: so you gave him another toy and that made him happy?
M: 'cause [brother name] said … is you car to me… and then I gaved it back to [brother's name]

R: OK… what about any grown-ups, can they do anything to make the baby feel better?
Max: I gave… I'm very nice to [brother's name] and he doesn't want me to take me on the lead… so [brother's name] wants to get off the lead and [brother's name] keeps running into the road by himself…

When playing with the cat characters, Leon thought the little boy cat needed another child companion – a girl cat robot – to be happy on his birthday.

4.1.11 Adults are not always helpful

During their draw and talk session, all the children spoke of adults not always being helpful when dealing with emotionally charged situations. Rose was disappointed that her key worker was not there when Rose first started school and also with the key worker absence on the trip to the zoo with her family. When asked to imagine a child just like him whose birthday was that day, Leon chose to tell me a story about him playing on the climbing frame outside and a grown-up pulling him down and throwing him on to the floor. Leon was not happy with that course of action but he told me it did not hurt him, he simply pretended he was dead when landed on the floor, and that pretending was cool. The adults in Cherry's story, about an imaginary little girl who had her toy taken away by someone else, appeared not to be helpful and took the toy from the little girl so that she could not reach it:

Researcher: can they do anything else to make her feel better?
Cherry: they take her toy away again and they put it behind her… so she can't get it and that's sad…
R: that's sad… OK… but we don't want her to feel sad, we want her to feel better…

In Cherry's play with the cat characters, after dancing with her mummy and grandmother cat on her birthday, the little girl cat became sad because she could not remember where her toy was – it was daddy cat who took it away. After all the cat characters took turns in fighting over a toy, the little girl cat in Cherry's story, becomes angry again because all the grown-ups were angry:

Researcher: […] But do you remember the little girl cat was really angry about that toy. Now, is she still angry?
Cherry: No she isn't, she's happy.
R: Oh okay. What happened?

C: Angry with the grownups.
R: Why the adults...grownups.
C: Because they're angry. They're angry. Okay. Baby's going to stand. Shout really loudly (cries out), he said.

Max's younger brother found it upsetting when his mother collected some of his brother's toys to take them to the charity shop. Max told me this story when asked to imagine a child whose toy was taken away by another whilst playing at nursery. When Jasmine was in the woods with her parents, her mother seemed to help by starting to collect some leaves with her whilst her dad, whilst described helpful at the beginning, later on brought up a workbook and that did not help Jasmine feel better:

Researcher: what about daddy, what did daddy do to make the little girl happier?
Jasmine (continuing to draw): daddy carried on a little book… but I didn't do any work… didn't make me happy

Whilst the little girl cat was getting ready for her first day at school, she started crying and feeling sad. Daisy told me that mummy and daddy cat could help by putting loads of plasters on her face. When queried if that would make the little girl happy, Daisy replied she would still feel sad and no one, in the end, seemed to be able to help:

Researcher: No. And how is she feeling once they had plasters on?
Daisy: Feeling...(hesitates).
R: She's what? It's your story.
D: Sad.
R: She's still sad? Okay. Can someone else help her then?
Daisy: No.
R: Make her feel better, no? Somebody at school maybe?
Daisy: No.
R: Mummy and daddy can't help her?
Daisy: (No reply).
R: No. Remember it's your story. You just make it up as you want, wanted it to be.
Daisy: They will not do anything!

4.1.12 Sometimes children deal with the emotions on their own

During the draw and talk sessions, some of the children spoke of their imaginary characters, siblings or friends that had to deal with emotions and

emotionally charged situations on their own. In Leon's story, his friend had to pull funny faces to cheer herself up when the toy is taken away from her. For Max's younger brother nobody and nothing could provide comfort, to start with, at his new preschool when he first went there. Perhaps the most noticeable was Daisy's story about a little girl who went to a school all by herself with no one present there and with nothing to do. This little girl wanted to go home but there was no one to pick her up so in the end she decided to ride home on her scooter alongside the road traffic:

Researcher: OK… who's taking her to school?
Daisy: [pause] err… no one
R: no one is taking her to school… OK… but if… on a different day can someone else take her to school?
D: [pause] no
R: is she going to the school by herself?
D: yeah
R: OK… any grown-ups in the school?
D: no
R: There are no grown-ups in the school… where she is going?
D: [pause] no…
R: what about other children… any other children there?
D: [pause] no
R: oh… right… so she's going to a school and there's nobody there?
D: [pause] yeah
R: OK…can she go to a different school… where there are children and adults?
D: [pause] no..
R: no?... you want her to go to a school just by herself?
D: [pause] yeah
R: what is she doing there at that school?
D: [pause] nothing
R: … nothing… is she still happy about it?
D: no…
R: … no… how would she feel then?
D: [pause] err [pause]… she wants to… she wants to go home
R: she wants to go home? … all right…and who comes to pick her up then?
D: no one…
R: no one?... oh… she wants to go home but there's no one to pick her up… how will she get home then?
D: errr… she'll ride on her scooter…
R: she'll ride on her scooter… oh that's a big girl… will ride on her scooter…
D: on the road…
R: on the road?... with the cars?
D: nnn…yeah…

R: OK… what is she's doing in school then… you said she was doing nothing… is that every day or maybe other days…
D: every day…
R: every day.. OK …is she still happy?
D: no
R: no… how is she then?
D: sad…
R: she's sad…can someone help her feel a bit better?
D: no
R: no.. we don't want to send someone to help her…
D: no

Daisy continued with this theme in her story about a little girl whose favourite toy is taken away by another child when playing at nursery. To start with the little girl takes her toy back and is happy again. Daisy commented that the little girl was sad when her toy was taken away and that there were no grown-ups there to help her. Daisy revisited this theme in her play with the cat family. When asked to show me what could happen next after the little girl cat started crying whilst getting ready for her first day at school, Daisy replied:

Daisy: Then she puts her clothes on.
Researcher: Okay. Who puts her clothes on?
Daisy: Does it her own self.

The above analyses have shown that there are a variety of ways in which adults can help with the emotion regulation of children. These include providing distraction or a transitional object, engaging with children in fun activities, being close and present and offering comfort as well as delivering justice to help resolve conflicts. Children connect feelings with physical symptoms and they see adults playing a part in helping them overcome some of these physical symptoms associated with feelings.

Children can also be a key factor in helping children with their emotion regulation. However it is important to note that for children there are often situations where they do not feel that someone can help with their emotion regulation and other situations where adults are found not to be helpful.

These Findings will be discussed more fully in the Discussion chapter of this paper.

4.2. Second research question: What methods do young children find helpful in allowing them to express their views on emotion regulation?

The second thematic analysis looked at what children identified as the most helpful way in engaging with them and getting their views. A semi-structured interview was used with the children at the end of each data collection session (See Appendix 8). For themes that are not necessarily related to the semi-structured interview data, data comes from what the children said during their individual sessions with the researcher as well as fieldwork and research diary notes.

Table 4.2: Themes by research question and data collection method

Draw and talk activity	Playing with cat family activity	Taking photos activity
4.1.1 Context does not define the feelings		
4.1.2 Feelings may be connected to physical symptoms		
4.1.3 Distraction helps a child when upset		
4.1.4. Adult engagement helps		
4.1.5. Adults help children overcome the physical symptoms associated with feelings		
4.1.6. Adults delivering justice helps resolve feelings		
4.1.7. Close adult presence helps		
4.1.8. Being touched and comforted by an adult helps		
	4.1.9. Adults providing transitional objects could help	
4.1.10 Child engagement helps		
4.1.11 Adults are not always helpful		
4.1.12. Children deal with emotions on their own		
4.2.1. Drawing can	4.2.5. Playing with cats	4.2.7. Photos help with

help with story telling	characters helps to add details to the story	happy memories
4. 2. 2. Drawing is a helpful distraction	4.2.6. Playing with cats characters can be distracting	4.2.8. Photos are a way of making meaning of places in nursery
4.2.3. Drawing helps the child set the agenda		
4.2.4 Using names for characters is helpful		

12 themes emerged in relation to the first question (4.1.1 – 4.1.12) and a further 8 emerged in relation to the second research question (4.2.1 – 4.2.8). As can be seen in the table above, some themes emerged across data generated by all three data collection methods – draw and talk; playing with cat family; taking photos - (i.e.: theme 4.1.4). For the first research question most themes were common in data generated by the first two data collection methods – draw and talk and playing with cat family; with some themes emerging from data collected either via drawing and talking (i.e.: theme 4.1.12) or through playing with the cat family (i.e.: theme 4.1.9). For the second research question, with the exception of one theme (i.e.: theme 4.2.4), all were specific to data collected through one of the different methods of data collection.

When answering the second research question, the findings will present both what children said they found helpful, or what they've preferred, in terms of activity, but also the researcher's interpretation based the richness of themes emerging from each research activity.

Generally, the children taking part in the research spent the shortest amount of time on their last research activity – taking photos around the nursery, and relatively similar amounts of time in their drawing and talking session compared to the playing with the cat characters. Daisy and Rose spent longer in their draw and talk sessions whilst Cherry spent almost twice as much time playing with the cats compared with her draw and talk session (See Appendix 9).

4.2.1. Drawing can help with story telling

To preserve the children's anonymity the samples of drawings included in the figures in text and in the Appendix 12 are not attributed to individual children.

Although all children taking part in the research engaged to some degree with the drawing activity, only two of them, Jasmine and Cherry, chose to talk about their drawings or use the drawing activity to supplement what they were talking about in the session. Jasmine seemed engaged in her independent drawing throughout her session and commented out loud on the details she was adding and on whom she was going to draw next:

> Researcher: OK. You were a bit tired at the start. And then what happened?
> Jasmine (continuing to draw with her pink crayon): doing another one of these… and one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, nine… then I'm gonna do… daddy
> R: Okay
> J (drawing): no it's mummy now…
> R: it's mummy now…
> J (drawing a person): doing mummy… and it's her mouth… one, two, three…. one, two, three (adding hair details on each side of the drawing's head)….one, two, three, four, five (adding fingers to the hands)… one, two, three, four, five…
> R: that's a very pretty drawing Jasmine…
> J: then… daddy… daddy is this tall.. all the way up here… one, two…

Figure 4.2.1 Drawing in response to anxious scenario.

Whilst Cherry appeared to draw in response to the scenarios given by the researcher, she too commented out loud on the details she was adding to her drawings and on her choices of colour. When she produced her drawing about a little girl who would become angry when another child took her toy away, Cherry invited the researcher to look at her drawing that was supporting her story about the imagined little girl:

> Researcher: how is E feeling?
> Cherry (explaining details from her picture): she's feeling OK … she's got two eyes.. two cheeks…
> R: but she was playing with her favourite toy and someone takes it away without asking, how is she feeling about that?
> C: she was sad
> R: she was sad… OK…
> C (add detail to her drawing): look, there's her sad face…

4.2.2 Drawing is a helpful distraction when talking

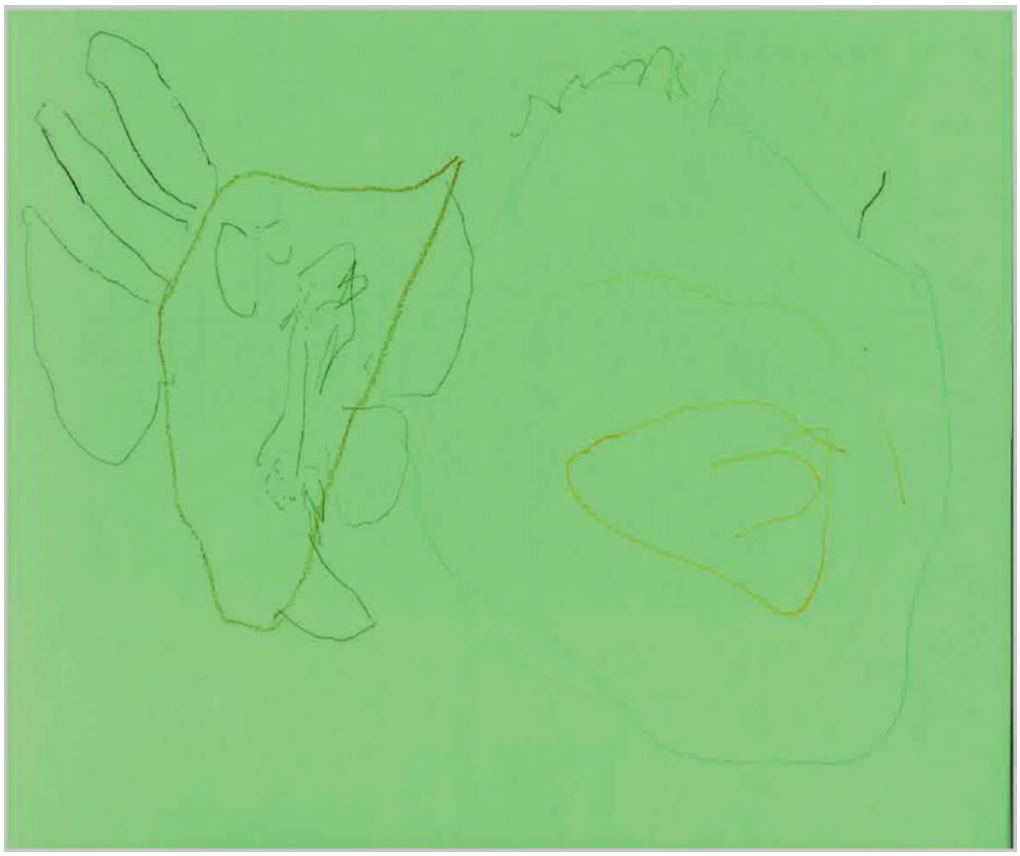


Figure 4.2.2 Drawing in response to happy scenario

Apart from Cherry and Jasmine who explicitly referred to their drawings, the rest of the children used the paper and crayons, provided for the draw and talk activity, mostly to sketch lines, exercise mark making and to keep busy whilst also engaging in conversation with the researcher. The children's non-verbal communication, captured in the verbal transcription of data generated through drawing and talking sessions, is also a testament of children finding helpful having the paper and crayons in front of them whilst talking to the researcher. In many cases the drawings produced in the research session were limited in terms of details and representational images of human form but that was to be expected of very young children's drawings (Duncan, 2013). In addition to samples of drawings included in this chapter, please see Appendix 12 – CD.

Leon, whilst initially started drawing before he received the prompt from the researcher, refused to do more than one drawing because he claimed his mother would be crossed if he used too much paper. He did, however, continue to engage with the rest of the session and he claimed that one drawing he produced would be for his mother.

Although only fleetingly engaged with the drawing, Daisy spoke more in her draw and talk session than in the playing with the cat characters session. Daisy told me she enjoyed the drawing session; she liked the adults taking back the gingerbread man away. Daisy also liked that the child ate his own teeth. Daisy told me she found helpful drawing about the monster. Next time we met, and Daisy played with the cat family, she told me that she preferred drawing over playing with the cats:

> Researcher: You don't have to choose one of them, is it, did you like today playing with the cats or did you like last time when you did the drawing?
> Daisy: Last time when I did the drawing.
> R: Okay. Why is that?
> Daisy: (No reply).
> R: Tell me more. Why did you like that one better than playing with cats?
> Daisy: Cos I… was drawing.

At our last meeting, after we finished talking about her photos, Daisy was asked for feedback on all three session. She remained consistent and told me that her favourite activities were drawing and taking photographs. The one activity she did not like very much was the playing with the cats.

At the end of all research activities, Jasmine told the researcher that she preferred the drawing over all the other activities:

> Researcher: You like that one? Does it mean drawing?
> Jasmine: Yeah.
> Researcher: It means drawing. Okay. And, and why did you like drawing best?
> Jasmine: Cos I always like drawing (inaudible) if I see drawing I go and do drawing.

4.2.3. Drawing helps the child set the agenda

Figure 4.2.3. Drawing in response to angry scenario

During the draw and talk sessions, right from the start it became apparent that most children had their own agenda: all children, taking part in the study, engaged with the activity but had individual ways of bringing their own stories and characters into the drawings and gave me responses that appeared completely unrelated to the questions and more with their own interests and recently lived life experiences. Jasmine was interested in rainbows rather than exploring what a child just like her would feel on her birthday:

> Jasmine (playing with her hair then choosing an orange colouring pencil): I'm gonna do a rainbow…

Researcher: Okay, you do a rainbow
J: (choosing more colours to add to the rainbow)
R: Okay, are you good at imagining?
Key worker: [Jasmine] is very good at imagining.
R: Can you imagine a child just like you whose birthday is today…
Key worker: Oh, wow
R: Can you draw what that child is thinking and doing on his birthday?
J (playing with a purple crayon and then shaking head): No… I'm only doing this rainbow… (she picked up a yellow crayon instead and continued drawing her rainbow)
R: You're only doing the rainbow… When you finish the rainbow do you want to think about that child…
J: (shaking her head)
R: … whose birthday is today?
J: (still shaking her head)
R: No? … But if it was your birthday…
J: Now I'm gonna do green on my rainbow (J picks up a green colouring pencil)

Rose, to start with, wanted to explore the issue around wearing same colour shoes rather than imagine a child just like her on her first day at school:

Researcher: […] Okay. Right. Now can you imagine a little girl just like you who is starting school today and she doesn't know anyone in the school.
Rose: There was just one conker outside and then I found two.
R: You found two. Okay. How would this girl feel on her first day at school?
Rose: Erm… why...why can't have the same colour ...colour shoes?
R: Why can't we have the same colour shoes? That's a good question. Why do you think we can't all have the same colour shoes?
Rose: Because they got to be purple and pink.

The researcher showed interest and curiosity for the children's own drawing initiatives or stories when playing with the cat family characters, and sometimes answers to research questions were gathered in this way. At the end of the draw and talk session, Jasmine was asked about her experience:

Researcher: is it something that you didn't like about today?
Jasmine (stopping drawing for a moment): no… those trains are there…(resuming drawing)… all the passenger are going to go on the train…
R: those are the passengers?
J (continuing to draw): yeah…
R: are they grown-ups or children?
J (continuing to draw): grown-ups… one, two, three, four, five
R: how do they feel about going on the train?
J (continuing to draw): one, two, three, four, five… Okay.. that's one…there's only one passenger there…

R: only one passenger, Okay.
J (pointing to details in her drawing): now there's another one for that train… that one is for that one… and another is for that one… and another for that one… and another for that one…(resuming drawing) there's a child next…
R: is anybody going to a new school.. from these passengers?
J (continuing to draw): this boy that I'm drawing now….
R: OK… it's a boy you're drawing … is he going to a new school?
J(continuing to draw): yeah

4.2.4 Using names for characters is helpful

The intention was to keep the stories neutral by asking them to imagine "a child just like you" (see Appendix E - methodology with the scrips for the draw and talk scenarios) or play with little cat children and other family members of a Sylvanian cat family. However, the children appeared keen to bring the dialogue and stories into their world, make it more meaningful by either naming the characters with their own names:

Researcher: you're done now… Okay… do you want to draw the child whose birthday is on this rocket?
Leon (started writing on the paper): I want my name
R: yeah… it could be you… it could be someone else… they could go on this special rocket…
L [interrupting]: my name is like this though
R: OK, that is good to know… right, Leon, on this child's birthday, who is there with them?
L: me

or using names of their family members:

Researcher: Okay … that's good… interesting… now, Max, this little boy, on his birthday, who is around him… any grown-ups?
Max: It's [sibling's name]… [sibling's name] is …love… [sibling's name] doesn't like my cake now… last time [sibling's name] liked my cake and then [sibling's name] didn't like my cake…

or relating to own similar life experiences:

Researcher: Max, imagine a boy just like you who is starting school today and it doesn't know anybody, how do you think…
Max: [interrupting] [sibling's name]…
R: how do you think…
M: [interrupting] last time [sibling's name] was starting to cry a bit…when last time… and when it was this day [sibling's name] didn't cry

For Max, drawing back on his own life experiences helped him answer some of the researcher's questions. The same applied for Rose who seemed find helpful naming her characters in her drawings:

> Researcher: Do you wanna tell me about this drawing, that looks very interesting? Lots of lines and lots of zigzags. And some lines are straight and some lines are wavy and look the conker likes to sit right at the edge of it. Ah, you've drawn a special place for the conker there.
> Key worker: Do you want to tell me about your picture Rose?
> Rose: It's Hello Kitty.
> Key worker: It's Hello Kitty. Ah.
> R: It's Hello Kitty.
> Key worker: You did Hello Kitty this morning as well didn't you on your painting. It's a favourite thing isn't it?
> Rose: If anyone doesn't me want to draw...do Hello Kitty...they want to do Hello Kitty on their own.
> Key worker: We don't mind you doing Hello Kitty.
> R: No, I don't mind you doing Hello Kitty.
> Rose: I liked to do ghosties yesterday and I like doing Hello Kitties.
> Key worker: Different things every day.
> R: You have to draw different things every day. But we can do a drawing about Hello Kitty having a birthday. Does Hello Kitty have a birthday?
> Rose: (No reply).

Both Rose and Jasmine named the cat characters when playing with them. In Rose's case, little girl cat kept her name for all the stories whereas Jasmine changed the names of little girl cat and her family for each story.

4.2.5 Playing with the cat family helps to add detail to the child's story

Cherry spent considerable more time playing with the cats and on two occasions when asked whether she finished with one particular story she indicated that she wanted more time to play. Cherry did not stick to the characters given for each of the vignettes and she added more from the box:

> Cherry is asking for the baby cat character and introduces it into the story. Cherry has picked the smiley faces fan and is now unfolding it, singling out the green happy face. Cherry is showing little girl cat the green happy face, then shows it to the baby cat. Then she singles out yellow straight face and makes a comment about it. She then singles out the red sad face. Cherry packs the fan away and she shows the characters the green happy face on top. R gives Cherry the box lid as a pretend car. Cherry starts arranging the characters into the pretend car (extract from visual data transcription, Cherry's play with the cat family).

At the end of the session Cherry claimed it was the drawing that she liked best because she did not like the vignette where the children were arguing over a toy. However, at our next and last session, after talking about her photos, Cherry changed her mind and she reported that out of all three activities she carried out with me, it was the playing with the cat family that was her favourite. However, the part she did not like remained the fighting:

> Researcher: The cat family. Why is that, why is it that you liked the cat family?
> Cherry: Because it's my favourite.
> R: It was your favourite. What did you like about it?
> C: Cos it...it...it was keeping me happy.
> R: It was keeping you happy. Right. Was there one that you didn't like so much, was there one activity?
> C: When they fighted.

Although Rose spent less time overall, playing with the cats as compared to drawing and talking, and spoke much less, her play was rich in detail. When answering the first research question, the visual transcription of her play session offered more data than the verbal transcript. See Appendix 12 – CD – for full transcript. Rose responded to the vignettes posed by the researcher, she remained focused on the stories a bit longer and her characters interacted more:

> Rose breaks the circle to bring all characters closer together in a semicircle. She then takes Grandpa cat and uses it to push the birthday cake and knock over daddy cat. Grandpa cat's glasses fall off in the process.
> Once Grandpa cat is mended Rose takes the little girl cat to greet him. Once the little girl cat character greets the Grandpa cat, Rose uses it to push mummy cat out of the circle and leaves it facing out. Rose then takes the Grandpa cat character and uses it to bring mummy cat back to the circle around the birthday cake. Rose then uses little girl cat to push Grandpa cat back on to the table. Rose uses Grandma cat character o rescue Grandpa cat but in the process knocks over the mummy cat character. Rose then picks all of them up and arranges them in the circle around the birthday cake (extract from visual transcript, Rose's play with the cat family)

At the end of the session Rose reported to have preferred the playing with the cats over the drawing:

> Researcher: Now when...if you think about the drawing that we did together and the play time with cats today, which one did you like best?

Rose: (No reply. Tapping sound). [Rose is pointing to each one of the cat characters in turn]
R: Did you like the cats or the drawing better, which one?
Rose: The cats. (Whispers).
R: Oh, the cats. (Whispers). Ah, why's that?
Rose: 'cose I did (speaking softly).

Once we looked at all the photos, at the end of our interview, Leon told me he would have liked to come back in there and play with the cat characters, in particular enact '*the fighting'* scene (angry vignette). I wonder if Leon would have liked to take one of the cat characters on a journey around the school and take photographs so that he could share them with the little cat. Did Leon see the play as an avenue for expression, as a way to externalise feelings through play? (data used from the research diary). Further fieldwork notes after Leon's play session reveal:

> Brilliant participation. Willing to chat but unsure about touching the toys, so I had to move them around for him. He was telling me what to do or say as the characters moved about. He also brought lots of his own stories (22.10.15)

4.2.6 Playing with the cat family can sometimes be distracting

> Jasmine loved playing and she gave me elaborate stories that quickly went off track. Went along with them but also had to bring them back on track. She was her for over 30 minutes (fieldwork notes, dated 20.10.15)

When presented with the first vignette – the little girl's cat birthday, it took Cherry over eight minutes of play before she responded to the question of what could happen next in the story. Almost half of the entire play session was spent playing with the characters for the first story. In response to what can the grown-ups do to help the little cat children who were arguing over a toy at nursery, Cherry said:

Cherry: ...and now the girl is going to get that toy with the baby. Ready...set...fight. Okay so I'm gonna get fight out. There you go. [Cherry puts the toy car in between daddy and mummy cat who are now a boy and a girl and then reaches for the smiley face fan and chooses the yellow straight face].
Researcher: Right. Who...who's fighting for the toy?
C: Grandma.
R: Grandma's fighting for the toy. Oh interesting. How is grandma in the nursery because this is happening all in the nursery?

C: She...she's angry.
R: She's angry. What's she doing at the nursery in the first place?
C: I'm going to put happy on. She's happy. Nursery. There we go. Toy gets the little girl...the baby caught it. [Cherry is changing the face on the fan to the green happy one. Then she hands over the toy car to the baby cat].
R: The baby caught it. So not even the little girl cat has it.
C: One...two...three...go. He caught it. Well done. Okay. This time it is mummy cat.

Keeping up with the identities of her characters was fun but a mission in itself. At the end of the play session, Cherry's feedback seemed to contain a mixture of details from both the drawing and playing with the cats vignettes:

Researcher: Cherry, you said the drawing, why is that? Why did you prefer the drawing to the cats?
Cherry: Because the drawings were making her happy because on her birthday and we gonna keep the boy and the little baby and the naughty things back safe and sound...so she's on her sixteenth birthday. So it's the boy's birthday not the girl's birthday anymore, the boy's birthday.
R: Cherry, was there something about today that you didn't like about the play?
C: Yeah.
R: What was it that you didn't like?
C: The angry bit.

Similar to Cherry, Jasmine spent half the entire play session extending the second vignette – the little girl cat getting ready for her first day at school. More characters were brought into the story and all ended up at one point being stripped of their clothes for a bath and settled down for bed with a singing session of "*Farmer and the Wife are in the Den*". As the clothes were tiny both the key worker, present in the room, and the researcher had to step in to dress the characters back again so we could continue with the play session.

4.2.7 Taking photos helps with happy memories

More than half of the children taking part in the research reported that all places and objects photographed in nursery were places and objects that made them happy. Rose nodded affirmatively when asked whether there were any places that made her feel other than happy so she went on a second journey with the camera only to return with more photographs of happy places:

Researcher: Is that a happy place, unsure place or makes you angry?

Rose: Makes me happy.
Researcher: Makes you happy. So lots of places that makes you happy. Oh, and that's it. We're going back to the beginning. All of your pictures were of places or things in nursery that make you happy. Was there anywhere that we didn't go that you would have liked to take photographs of?

Looking through his photographs on the computer, Max commented:

Max: Everything is only happy.
Researcher: Everything is only happy. Oh, how come? How come everything is happy?
M: Because they all make me happy.
R: they all make you happy here at nursery. Oh what do the grownups do to keep you happy here?
M: Here, nursery school.
R: What do the grownups do then here at nursery to keep you happy?
M: Look after to me.

After confirming all photographs she took were of happy places in nursery, Jasmine reported that teachers:

"will make me happy and jumping up and down and jumping all around […]They keep me happy when I come dance".

4.2.8 Taking photos as a way of making meaning about spaces in nursery

Cherry chose to take photos around the nursery of places that made her feel other than happy. Cherry used the yellow straight / not so sure face to indicate some of the places in photos that made her feel that way. Two of her photos were of places that made her cross – Cherry chose the red sad/angry face from the feelings fan to illustrate how she felt towards them. Cherry found using the feelings fan very helpful during this activity as she kept coming back to it to check that she had taken photos to go with all three faces depicted but also to check whether the places in nursery she was finding herself in (during her journey) were matching one of the faces on the fan:

Researcher: Right, let's go to the next one. Still the wellies.
Cherry: Still happy.
R: Still happy. Ah. This is a picture of...is it your coat here?
C: Yeah. And [name of friend].

R: Okay. And this...the coats or the hangers which one is it...a happy place?
C: Not very nice.
R: Is it not so sure...yeah?
C: Yeah. Not so sure.
R: Not so sure. And why is it like that?
C: Because it's not...it's not...not my coat.
R: Ah. Okay.
C: That's my coat and that's [name of friend].
R: Okay. So because it's not your coat.
C: Shall we go back to the other one shall we?
R: Well will. Just a minute. Right, here you've taken a photograph of...
C: Somebody's hat.
R: It's a hat and what sort of place is that?
C: I don't like this kind...
R: Right, here it's a picture of the floor.
C: Out there.
R: Yeah. Okay. What sort of place is that?
C: Sad.
R: Oh it's a sad place. Okay. Why is it a sad place?
C: It comes from that room over there.
R: And it's a sad place because...?
C: It's not my favourite.
R: It's not your favourite.
C: I like that one it's smiley.
R: The smiley face. And this is a table. Ah this is a white board, the pens.

Daisy reflected that one of the photos was of a place that was both happy and sad and then she went further to elaborate how she felt when she was in that room and what could the teachers do to help her feel different:

Researcher: In the G room but none of the photos that you've taken there were any object or places that make you ...
Daisy: Happy and sad.
R: And when...where are you sad in what place in the G room.
D: In the B group room.
R: In the B group room. Just anywhere in there or is there a particular place that makes you sad?
D: When I'm in the B group room...
R: ...yeah...
D: ...I normally miss my mummy.
R: You miss your mummy and that's why you're sad. And how can the grownups help you, make you feel better?
[…]
R: So let's say you're sad and you miss your mummy what can the teachers do here to make you feel smiley again.
D: Err...drawing.
R: Drawing. They can let you do drawing or they can do it with you.
D: They can do it with me.

The second thematic analysis shows that children use a variety of means to express their voice. Drawing proves to be a powerful tool that allows some of the children to set the agenda for the session and playing with the cat characters helps add more detail to children's stories. Whilst being engaged with drawing helps some children with their story telling and also proves a helpful distraction when talking to the researcher, the playing with the cat characters can sometimes be distracting. Children also find helpful naming their characters in both their drawings and play with the cat characters. Taking photographs in nursery generates a lot of happy memories for the children. Photographing also helps children with reflecting on and making meaning about the spaces and objects they use in nursery and how these connect with children's feelings. These Findings will be discussed more fully in the Discussion chapter of this paper

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Chapter overview

This chapter reviews the findings in relation to this research's aims and questions with links made to previous research in the area. A number of interesting themes, unrelated to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006), emerged from data and they are also presented here. The final chapter of this thesis offers a critical review of the strengths and limitations of this research together with potential directions for future research. It concludes with researchers' reflections on the study, implications for the profession and the research's distinctive contribution.

5.2 Review of research aims and key findings

The aim of this research was to investigate children's perceptions of the role adults play in their emotional regulation. It also aimed to explore ways of engaging young children and eliciting their views. The research was qualitative in design and aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are children's perspectives on factors that influence their emotion regulation?

2. What methods do young children find helpful in allowing them to express their views on emotional regulation?

5.2.1 Review of findings related to the first research question

In response to being asked how the protagonist child or cat character would feel in a given emotionally charged situation, most children attributed to their protagonists a range of emotions. One child chose to respond with one discreet emotion for each scenario presented. Some of the children linked feeling emotions to experiencing upsetting physical symptoms, such as headaches or

being poorly, and this connection was most prominent for negative emotions such as anxiety.

Concurrent with findings from previous research (Boyer, 2013; Cole et al., 2009; Davis et al., 2010; Dennis & Kelemen, 2009; Eisenberg et al., 2010a, 2010b; Grolnick et al., 1999; Harden, 2012; Hutman & Dapretto, 2009; Morris et al., 2013; Nives Sala et al., 2014; Oppenheim et al., 1997; Robson, 2010; Sheffield Morris et al., 2007; Waters et al., 2010), it was clear from children's narratives that adults played an important role in their protagonists' emotion regulation. Very often, autobiographical references were made during their narratives and children related their own experiences involving significant adults in their lives. Thus, the adult role came into their stories quite often unprompted by the researcher. It seemed that children needed to tap into their previous life experiences to make sense of the hypothetical situations presented. The importance of children having previous experience with emotional situations so that they could generate appropriate emotion regulation strategies was highlighted previously by Davis et al. (2010).

Doing something fun or being engaged with an adult in an activity, both at home and at nursery, was seen as a helpful way to overcome negative feelings, such as being scared of feeling worried (Davis et al., 2010; Dennis & Kelemen, 2009; Nives Sala et al., 2014), but it was also important if the protagonist child or cat character was to feel happy for longer. Adult closeness, mainly family members, was important, particularly when children celebrated birthdays and wanted to stay happy for longer. The same applied when children experienced new beginnings, such as their first day at school. Adults who were not available, for example parents who dropped off children at nursery, could provide transitional objects (Winnicott, 1953) instead, such as allowing their child to bring their favourite toy to school.

Adults were seen as important in helping children overcome the uncomfortable physical symptoms associated with experiencing negative emotions. What was important for children was adult closeness and offering emotional support (Davis et al., 2010), providing distraction by engaging in a joint fun activity

(Dennis & Kelemen, 2009; Nives Sala et al., 2014; Waters et al., 2010) and providing comfort and touch. Similar to previous research (Davis et al., 2010; Dennis & Kelemen, 2009) adults were seen helpful in targeting the agents responsible for feelings of anger and sadness, particularly when children were in a nursery setting.

The research findings support the links between emotion regulation and attachment theory (Bowlby 1969; Brumariu & Kerns, 2010; Hoffer, 1994; Hutman & Dapretto, 2009; Kochanska, 2001; Waters et al., 2010). Adult closeness, adults providing transitional objects, adults' availability to engage in fun activities with the children, adults providing distraction or physical comfort when negative feelings were experienced, were all key themes that emerged from the children.

Adults were not always the preferred source of social support. Other children were sometimes enlisted for support when, protagonists in children's narratives, were dealing with both positive and negative emotions. Bowlby (1969) described children forming significant attachments with other children. Volling, McElwain and Miller, (2002) found that sibling relationship was particularly relevant to toddlers' development of emotion regulation when an older sibling was present. Moreover, adults were not always seen as helpful when children were trying to cope with emotions sometimes aggravating the protagonist child or cat character's feelings. Research by Waters et al. (2010) indicated a need for parents to develop a more accurate interpretation of their child's feelings in order to offer the appropriate emotion coaching. Harden (2012) perceived teachers as somehow limiting children's movement, censoring or approving certain emotional expressions. Bowie (2010) noted better association between children's self-report with difficulties regulating anger and later self-reported symptoms of depression or anxiety. When comparing children ratings of emotion regulation and later adult ratings of conduct disorders and externalised problem behaviours, in the same children, similar associations were not found. However, children who rated themselves low on the emotion regulation for sadness were more likely to be reported, by their fathers and teachers and not by mothers, to experience depressive symptoms. Children who rated themselves low on emotion regulation for anger were more likely to be reported

by their fathers as experiencing anxiety (Bowie, 2010). Bowie (2010) concluded that more accurate information on children's emotional functioning can be obtained from children themselves.

At times, no social support was enlisted by the children when their protagonists were dealing with negative emotions. In these instances, this lack of deployment of seeking adult support as a strategy was not as a result of reported metacognitive strategies (Davis et al., 2010; Nives Sala et al., 2014) but rather an expression of abandonment or engagement in self-distraction when feeling sad. See Daisy in 4.1.11 and 4.1.12 section of Findings.

5.2.2 Review of findings related to the second research question

5.2.2.1 Children's voice: what method yielded what data?

As Gibson, Aldiss, Hortsman, Kumpunen and Richardson (2010) point out:

> Most young children find direct questions difficult and therefore require the researcher to enter the world they are familiar with: the world of stories, dolls, drawing and puppets (Gibson et al., 2010, p.1399).

The researcher's role is not to present expert advice but facilitate change through innovative ways of listening to children and thus promote sustainable participatory culture (Roberts – Holmes, 2005).

The draw and talk sessions, as the first of the research activities, revealed most of the key themes for both research questions.

For the first research question, playing with the cat characters highlighted the theme around transitional objects as helpful strategies in dealing with emotions. The draw and talk method revealed the theme around children sometimes having to deal with emotions on their own. Otherwise both methods generated similar key themes for the first research question. Drawing proved to be a powerful tool that allowed some of the children to set the agenda for the session; it also allowed for more autobiographical details to come into children's narratives. Some children chose to use their drawings as a base for their conversation with the researcher but all seemed to engage with the paper,

crayons and the drawing as a way of keeping busy whilst talking. The children's responses seemed to indicate that they found the drawing activity child-friendly and non-threatening (Gibson et al., 2010).

Whilst being engaged with drawing helped some children with their story telling and also proved a helpful distraction when talking to the researcher, the playing with the cat characters was sometimes distracting.

Playing with the cat characters helped add more detail to children's stories and sometimes children requested more characters to be added into their play. If with the first activity – the drawing and talking – there was almost a natural ending, the child filling the paper or independently finishing drawing, the play scenarios could have been extended well over 30 minutes allocated per child for each data collection activity. More refocusing and reorientation was needed with this type of data collection and the researcher was often faced with the dilemma of encouraging and participating in a natural flow of conversation and finding the right time to refocus the child by repeating and reminding them of some of the questions or prompts.

Taking photographs in nursery generated a lot of happy memories for the children. Photographing also helped children with reflecting on and making meaning about the spaces and objects they used in nursery and how these connected with children's feelings.

5.2.2.2 Children's voice: what method of engagement did the children prefer?

The majority of the children changed their mind about their preferred method of engagement.

One child, Daisy, remained consistent in her preference for drawing and she was much more engaged with the paper and crayons than with the cat characters. It was not until the last session, that Daisy revealed some autobiographical information. It could have been that by that stage she felt

comfortable enough in researcher's presence to the point that she did not need the key worker present in the interview room.

Although she spent almost double the time engaged with the cat activity, Cherry indicated that she preferred drawing over the play with the cat family. By the end of the third session, Cherry revealed that playing with the cat family was her favourite activity after all, minus 'the fighting' (Cherry, taking photos transcript, p.3), the vignette for angry. It could be that Cherry found generating strategies for regulating anger somehow difficult.

Jasmine clearly liked drawing; she was proud of her drawings, and added her name to them as well as lots of details. But then she got really involved with the cat family characters and indicated that she preferred that activity over drawing, only to revert back to drawing as a favourite activity when she was asked again which she preferred out of the three she carried as part of the research.

Leon enjoyed drawing too, especially doing a rocket and an aeroplane and he also thought his mum would like the picture he drew in our session (Leon, draw and talk transcript, p.5). However, at the end of all research activities, when he was asked to reflect back on all of them, it was one of the vignettes in the playing with the cats that Leon would have liked to go back to and have another play.

Max reported at the end of each session that he enjoyed doing the activity and he did not pick one as his favourite. Max liked the drawing and talking about when he gave his rubbish truck to his brother (Max, draw and talk transcript, p.4). Max also said it was lovely drawing because there were lots of different coloured papers, pencils and crayons (Max, draw and talk transcript, p.5).

Although Rose spent less time overall, playing with the cats as compared to drawing and talking, and spoke much less, her play was rich in detail. At the end of second session Rose reported to have preferred the playing with the cats over the drawing. But the novelty of using a camera to take pictures in nursery, coupled with her reports that she never done that before, made taking photographs her favourite activities out of all three.

Children's expressed preferences seem to suggest that there is no one size fits all method that will engage them best. Some responded best to playing with the cat family, others clearly enjoyed drawing, some changed their mind later on. The themes might tell a different story and the way they were generated might lead to a belief that one method was more helpful that the other. But the message from the findings is that one must remain open to the many languages young children speak (Mallaguzzi, 1993) and the many methods with which they choose to communicate (Clark & Moss, 2001).

5.3 Children's communication of emotion through narrative techniques

> Narratives, like play scenarios, provide a way of organising and making sense of experience and sharing it with another (…) (Appelman, 2001, p.539)

Appelman (2001) also talks about adults scaffolding children's emotional experience through the medium of language and stories providing an enhanced level of emotion regulation. Whilst recognising the limitations of generalising from one case study, nonetheless there is an interesting perspective in Appleman's (2001) case study: the role of the researcher in providing a stress buffer for the emotionally shy child. The idea that the demand to construct a narrative in response to a vignette that presents an emotional dilemma, in an unfamiliar context (the researcher being present, the child taken out of their normal classroom) might be perceived as a threat. Without receiving emotional support, the child may become shy or even anxious. During the data collection carried out for this research, all children were accompanied by their key worker for the first two sessions in order to support the children's emotional security.

Oppenheim and Waters (1995), in their review of studies looking at narrative assessments of attachment representations, pointed out that children's responses are a measure of both "how children construct narratives about affective themes and communicate those to others as they are assessments of internal representations" (Oppenheim & Waters, 1995, p.203).

A number of studies reviewed in previous chapters employed narrative techniques to explore children's emotion regulation strategies. Some requested children to refer to autobiographical situations (Davis et al., 2010; Oppenheim et al., 1997) others employed fictional characters (Davis et al., 2010; Dennis & Kelemen, 2009; Cole et al., 2009; Nives Sala et al., 2014). The vast majority were conducted in laboratories, involved vignettes for negative emotions and employed statistical analysis of data generated this way. Some studies involved looking at associations between child-mother co-constructed and later child independent narratives (Oppenheim et al., 1997), some studies compared children's narratives to that of their parents (Dennis & Kelemen, 2009) and other studies explored children's independently generated range of emotion regulation strategies (Davis et al., 2010; Nives Sala et al., 2014) and compared them to the ones children recognised as effective from a choice offered by the researchers (Cole et al., 2009).

The present study was conducted in a naturalistic environment, the children's own nursery school, and the data generated by the narrative techniques employed were triangulated with visual methods: children's drawings, video recordings of research sessions and photographs. The young children taking part in the research produced narratives in response to similar vignettes focusing around one single emotion. The emotions chosen were both positive (happy) and negative (angry and anxious). Thematic analysis of data was used to generate key themes thus ensuring the voice of the child was listened to.

5.4 Other interesting findings

Looking at children's emotion labelling, there were some interesting findings from this study which do not directly relate to the research questions. For instance, not all children thought a child, just like them, would be happy on his/her birthday. Children described their protagonists feeling a range of emotions on their birthday – excited, sad, worried, scared. Starting a new school would make children happy and in most cases they would be fine. Except Leon, nobody thought the child whose toy was taken away by another

whilst playing at nursery would experience anger; the rest of the children said the child would be sad.

When the researcher embarked on the research trail, some time was spent thinking what sort of scenarios would be helpful to ask the children to think of. The researcher anticipated that a birthday would evoke happy feelings; starting school, particularly when children do not know anybody at the school, would evoke feelings of anxiety; whilst playing with a favourite toy and having that taken away by another child, would lead the children to evoke feelings of anger. The findings proved that children do not always think in those straightforward ways, and to expect so would be a mistake on the adults' part. It may be that the children were more honest, you can, after all, feel more than just happy on your birthday. Cole et al. (2009) noted that it is possible that "children can have multiple, different emotions in response to a challenge" (Cole et al., 2009, p.341).

Some children found it helpful if they gave a name to the imaginary child they were supposed to think about or to the child cat character, others wanted to keep them anonymous - Daisy always chose not to name her characters whilst Jasmine and Rose mostly chose to name their characters.

Jasmine defended her abilities to engage with the task (see draw and talk transcript) when I commented that the particular vignette wasn't working for her. She said she could do the talking (I can do the words), referring to her being able to engage with me, but that she was rather busy with some other drawing that clearly at that point she was favouring over my invitation to imagine and draw a child in a particular situation. Later she proved me wrong by answering directly all the questions I posed about her drawing of a boy who is waiting with his dad for the train to take the boy to his new school – link also with reflexive notes in later section of this chapter.

> Researcher: … Ear muffs… right… OK… do you want to try another on [drawing activity]… if the happy and the birthday is not really working?
> Jasmine (stopped drawing and nodded):… Well I can do this… can do the words…
> R: Words?

J (starting drawing again): … Yeah… I can do the words because I went in there before…

Colour was important to the young children. Some children spent some time choosing and debating their favourite coloured paper - Leon was disappointed I did not have orange and Jasmine wanted brown but then settled for pink coloured paper, same as her top, as she reflected. Other children commented on being able to colour with their preferred colour - Max loved the choice he had for colours, he loved green. And for some, talking about colours, took quite a central, and sometimes unusual, role in their interviews. For example, Cherry thought yellow was a helpful colour when the child was not feeling very well. Rose wanted to know why children can't all have the same colour shoes. Rose thought that same colour shoes – purple and pink - on all children could be fun:

Rose: Erm… why...why can't have the same colour ...colour shoes?
Researcher: Why can't we have the same colour shoes? That's a good question. Why do you think we can't have all the same colour shoes?
Rose: Because they got to be purple and pink.

Having the right colour shoes (green) it was important for Rose even when she was worried:

Researcher: Now Rose, did you remember what the grownups did to make the children...all children feel good in school and not worried?
Rose: Erm…they were worried but like … like this thing is get...I don't Have green shoes.

Drawing with loads of coloured crayons helped younger sibling feel better when crying (Rose, draw and talk transcript, p.8). Daisy included colour detail (purple) on the monster featuring in one of her narratives during the draw and talk session:

Researcher: who would you like this little girl to have there with her… on her birthday?
Daisy: pause
R: maybe to help her feel less scared?
D: pause
R: we can just imagine… just pretend
D: [pause] a monster
R: a monster…OK…is it a… a lady monster or a man monster?
D: [pause] errr… sleeping with purple things

R: purple things…sounds to me a bit like a Gruffalo
D: [pause] yeah…

Some children spontaneously incorporated research props into their conversations with the researcher. For some, having the feelings fan helped with play and story-telling - Leon chose the feeling fan as the best activity so far:

Researcher: Yes. Okay. Are we… now Leon remember last time I came here we did some drawing?
Leon: Yeah.
R: Now what was it, what was it better for you to do, the drawing or to do...
L: ...That.
R: To play with this?
L: Yeah, to play with that thing.
R: To play with the fan?
L: Yeah.

Cherry used the smiley faces fan to show transition between emotional states for her characters:

Cherry (Cherry picks up the smiley faces fan and shows the green happy face): Baby is going to go in very quietly and find his patch. They're happy okay.
Researcher: They're happy.
C: So baby choose happy and this little girl choose happy.
R: I like the fact that you've picked that sign up and started using it in your play.
C: Look.
R: Yeah, I think some of the clothes might come apart but doesn't have a Velcro...I don't think it does.
C (Cherry picks up the smiley face fan again and selects the yellow straight face): Well I think they're going to be scared in a minute. They're gonna be cross. Look that cross…
R: Oh, why are they going to be cross?
C: So I'll hold that. They've choose cross.
R: What happened?
C (Cherry demands that R brings the little girl cat to touch the yellow straight face): Choose cross.
R: Why are they cross now?
C (Cherry now selects the red sad face): And they're really sad now.

Max chose the happy face in the fan to indicate he was happy playing with the cats:

Researcher: Right, was there something that you did not like about today?

> Max (Max is pointing to the green smiling face then he folds the fan back together, green face on top): I'm happy playing. This is green so...so it...and yellow goes and then green just stays

These findings seem to suggest young children are capable of a sophisticated emotional response when faced with challenging situations and this could have implications for when adults engage in children's emotion coaching. Giving children the option to name fictional characters could prove helpful in creating meaning through narratives. Colour is important to young children and its link with emotion regulation merits further exploration in future research. Some young children have a strong agenda and it is best that adults recognise and validate that by showing interest and engaging with it. This will ultimately prove beneficial in sharing and exchanging ideas and co-constructing narratives with young children.

5.5 Strengths and limitations of the research. Future directions for research

Each child participating in this research was seen for three sessions by the researcher. This increased the chances to detect strong themes in the data emerging from children themselves. Cole et al. (2009) and Hughes, Lecce and Wilson (2007) considered the impact of the day-to-day variability effect and how collecting data over one single session could have captured just part of children's repertoire of responses.

Using both verbal and visual means of data collection ensured that the voice of the child, who was not always verbal, was not lost. In previous section of this chapter the benefits of triangulation of data was discussed. Findings revealed some of the benefits of researching with young children as well as challenges in analysing children's unusual and unexpected comments because they represent "raw, highly informative and socially significant responses" (Pinter & Zandian, 2014, p.67). It is worth considering the potential impact of the researcher's questions and probes on children's responses (Oppenheim & Waters, 1995). Future research could explore that in more depth.

In the planning stages, time was factored in for building a relationship with the children prior to the data collection. Developing a trusting relationship between the researcher and the participants makes it more likely for the children to offer information (Rix, 2014; Robson, 2011). Time constraints meant that the data collection activities started close to October half term. In addition, the practicalities of an educational psychologist role – children almost never have time to familiarise themselves with the educational psychologist prior to a visit, the researcher decided not to meet the children prior to data collection activities. The research was not intended to be ethnographic in nature so the time needed to build relationship with children was used to schedule extra data collection session to cater for any participants' absences due to illness or holidays. However, an initial brief visit around the setting was facilitated by the Head Teacher and the children taking part in the research had an opportunity to see a photo of the researcher included in their consent form.

This research aimed to only gather young children's views and so no data was collected from the children's parents/carers or teachers. Unlike some studies reviewed (Bowie, 2010; Dennis & Kelemen, 2009) the researcher was interested in what young children had to say with no further need to validate that information with adult self-reports. However, it is worth noting that obtaining information from significant adults in children's lives could help build the picture around the context in which children's narratives developed.

The children taking part in this research were not assessed for emotion understanding, verbal ability or ToM. There were a number of reasons for this. Hughes et al., (2007) demonstrated young children's talk about others' inner states, by the age of four, is less dependent on verbal ability and more related to ToM. Moreover, research by (Cole et al., 2009; Nives Sala et al., 2014) shows that emotion understanding and verbal ability did not influence young children's ability to generate emotion regulation strategies. Nives Sala et al., (2014) found that verbal ability influenced the type of emotion regulation strategies reported by young children, with 3 to 4 year olds reporting a higher number of social support strategies as supposed to behavioural or meta-cognitive emotion regulation strategies. Findings from this research confirm that young children, aged between 3 and 4 years old, see adults playing an

important part in supporting their emotion regulation. Future research could explore the link between how young children see the role of adults in their emotion regulation and ToM, using participatory methods of eliciting children's views.

In contrast with most studies reviewed, this research focused both on positive (happy) as well as negative (angry and anxious) emotions. The working definition of emotion regulation, adopted by the researcher, involved both maintenance and extension as well as management or inhibition of a particular emotion. Findings revealed what young children reported adults could do to maintain children's happiness as well as the need for parents to accurately read their children's emotions. Future research could involve larger samples and look more in depth at children's perception of happiness and the role adults play in maintaining that emotional state for the children in their care.

5.6 Implications for the profession

Given the links between emotion regulation and mental health and wellbeing (DfE, 2014; PHE, 2014; Weare, 2015) there is a role for EPs in promoting mental health and wellbeing in schools by addressing issues around children's emotion regulation.

Findings from this research demonstrate children see adults playing an important role in their emotion regulation. Given that some pre-school and certainly most of school aged children spend more time in the company of other adults, such as their teachers and support staff there is a role for EPs in coaching school staff on emotion socialisation beliefs and practices (Boyer, 2009; Morris et al., 2013). The way adults model experiencing emotions, the way adults read and interpret children's emotional displays, how adults respond to children's emotional expression can all influence and interfere with young children's emotion regulation (Boyer, 2009; Eisenberg et al., 1998; Morris et al., 2013). Furthermore, there is scope for EPs to address children's emotion regulation and emotion competence by enhancing parental understanding of their children's emotional competence (Boyer, 2009) or working with parent's own emotion awareness and regulation through parental emotion coaching

programmes (Havighurst, Wilson, Harley, Kehoe, Efron & Prior, 2013). Moreover, EPs could also take into account, in their psychological formulations, ways in which families and cultures place significance and organise children's experiences, including emotional expression and socialisation (Boyer, 2013).

Listening to children is seen as an integral part of an Educational Psychologist (EP)'s role and the Mosaic approach (Clark & Moss, 2001) proposed here as a methodological tool gives the EPs the opportunity for listening to young children without imposing an adult's agenda on them (Mercieca & Mercieca, 2014). In light of current UK legislation (Children's Act 2014) and SEND guidance (DfE & DoH, 2015) it should be no longer acceptable to write in a report: "the child is too young to express his/her views". The implications of epistemological oppression when assessing children with SEN, i.e.: a priori assumption that young children are not capable of expressing their views due to their level of development, is discussed in Sewell (2016). EPs should play an important role in reducing the discrimination experienced by children when it comes to professionals listening to their views (Harding & Atkinson, 2009; Swadener & Polakow, 2011; Sewell, 2016) and incorporating those views in plans that affect them (Hart, 1992; UNCR, 1989). Moreover, EPs should act as advocates for the young child by empowering the child through developing his/her autonomy and ensure the voice of the child is heard (Fox, 2015; Harding & Atkinson, 2009).

Showing patience, curiosity and creativity, as well as adapting expectations to a young child's interests and level of development (UNCR, 2005) should become embedded in EP practice. The process of psychological assessment and the subsequent writing of reports should reflect where on the ladder of participation (Hart, 1992) the EP involvement was situated. Moreover, when eliciting the views of young children EPs should enter the young child's world through the child's preferred ways of communication (UNCR, 2005) – that is the world of stories, dolls, drawings and puppets (Gibson et al., 2010; UNCR, 1989) as well as video and photography (Clark & Moss, 2001; Harden, 2012; Robson, 2010).

When representing children's views by recording them into reports, EPs should strive to include more of children's actual words rather than EPs, or other adults, paraphrasing, in order to ensure accuracy of the child's views rather

than adults' interpretation of what the child said (Harding & Atkinson, 2009; Ingram, 2013). Ingram (2013) goes on further to suggest children should not only be asked directly for their views but also invited to comment on the EPs case formulation. This would be both empowering for the children and enlightening for professionals (Ingram, 2013).

The research supported previous findings around adult's role in children's emotion regulation but it did so through creative methods of listening to young children's perspectives. By eliciting children's views on the adult's role in children's emotion regulation, including maintaining children's happiness, the research also adds to the literature looking at emotion regulation, mental health and wellbeing (DfE, 2014; Weare, 2011).

This research adds to the literature highlighting the benefits of researching with young children (Pinter & Zandian, 2014) using participatory methods such as the Mosaic method (Clark & Moss, 2001). This research views young children as competent in expressing their views and experts in their own lives (Clark & Moss, 2001; Clark, 2005; Robert – Holmes, 2005; UNCRC, 2005).

5.7 Reflections on the process

The children taking part in this research opened up to me despite not knowing me, so I am grateful for their candour and honesty. They allowed me into their world and shared some intimate autobiographical moments. Because it would be fair to assume, whether it was through drawing or playing with toys or taking photos, the children were talking about themselves and about their families, they were talking about their own experiences in the nursery, quite unreservedly.

The first child I interviewed was Jasmine. From the start of the first session she told me she was going to draw a rainbow and no, she wasn't going to come back and think about the imaginary child, but just carry on drawing her rainbow and she then spent a lot of time adding more detail to the rainbow. "Don't panic", I said to myself, "it might not go smoothly but just go with the flow and see where the story takes you". And I was rewarded, because once I made it

relevant to her, brought familiarity – namely her own experiences – Jasmine started answering my questions. Moreover, later on in the talk and draw session, she took my lead and one of the characters in the train station, a boy, the only child in her drawing, was waiting for a train to take him and his dad to his new school. So there was the vignette I was looking for, effortlessly enacted but in her own terms. How did the adult help, my question followed? It came out naturally, holding the boy's hand thus comforting and protecting – one would assume anxiety gone. This was a story that came from Jasmine and I simply showed curiosity.

For the taking photos activity, I started by giving the instructions to the child in the main room in the nursery, on how to use the camera. Not only that this was distractive, but I suspect in was confusing too. Jasmine was one of the first children to undertake each activity and when I gave her the instructions for the camera, she told me that she wanted to come back to the little interview room where we did the drawing and the playing with the cat family. Was that a safe base for her? Did she enjoy the other two activities carried out in there and wanted to keep that enjoyment going by having her private space?

During the data collecting sessions with the children, I was both uncovering and creating data through drawing, play and taking photos. When it comes to young children, the reality of research is that you have to work with them to produce the data, they will not simply produce it upon request. Young children sometime employ metaphors and you have to use the right medium to get to the truth. And even then, the truth (reality) can be disguised as a character, a fantastical one, but more often is someone the young child already knows, it's someone from their family or a dear character from a favourite story or animation.

> (…) Our image of children no longer considers them as isolated and egocentric, does not see them only engaged in action with objects, does not emphasise only the cognitive aspects, does not belittle feelings or what is not logical, and does not consider with ambiguity the role of the affective domain. Instead our image of the child is rich in potential, strong, competent, and most of all, connected to adults and other children (Malaguzzi, 1993, p. 10)

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Appendices

Appendix 1: EYFS areas of learning and their associated ELGs

Personal, social and emotional development involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities.

ELG 06	**Self-confidence and self-awareness:** Children are confident to try new activities, and to say why they like some activities more than others. They are confident to speak in a familiar group, will talk about their ideas, and will choose the resources they need for their chosen activities. They say when they do or do not need help.
ELG 07	**Managing feelings and behaviour:** Children talk about how they and others show feelings, talk about their own and others' behaviour, and its consequences, and know that some behaviour is unacceptable. They work as part of a group or class, and understand and follow rules. They adjust their behaviour to different situations, and take changes of routine in their stride.
ELG 08	**Making relationships:** Children play cooperatively, taking turns with others. They take account of one another's ideas about how to organise their activity. They show sensitivity to others' needs and feelings, and form positive relationships with adults and other children.

Appendix 2: Systematic literature review

Electronic databases searched:

Electronic databases

Academic Search Complete (EBSCO)

British Education Index (EBSCO)

Child Development & Adolescent Studies (EBSCO)

Education Research Complete (EBSCO)

ERIC (EBSCO)

ETHOS

Google Scholar

PsycARTICLES (EBSCO)

PsycINFO (EBSCO)

JSTOR

Science Direct

Taylor & Francis

Wiley Online Library

Search strategy using key words:

Key word 1:	**Key word 2:**	**Key word 3:**	**Key word 4:**
Emotion regulation	**Children's views**	**Adults' role**	**Age group**
Emotion control	Mosaic approach	Parent-child relationship	Young children
Self-control	Creative methods	Teachers' role	Pre-schoolers
Self-regulation	Children self-report	Mothers' role	Nursery school

Affect regulation	Dyads	Early years
Emotion management		Toddlers
		Early childhood
		Kindergarten

Whenever possible, Boolean search was used in the current review; this uses AND, OR and NOT as search operators to combine search terms and define inclusion and exclusion criteria. Alternatively connectors or parentheses were used to combine keywords and create search phrases. Thesaurus in PsycInfo was also used to generate searches.

Systematic literature review through the above databases and using the search strategies mentioned, revealed a combined 582 peer reviewed articles (published in the last 20 years) and dissertation records. Excluding duplication and using the screening process detailed below, only 12 articles and 5 dissertation thesis were included for review.

Screening process: studies were excluded if they fulfilled at least one of the exclusion criteria. It is worth noting that the researcher adopted the UN (2005) definition of young children as children up to the age of 8 years. For longitudinal studies or cross-sectional studies that included a variety of ages, the mean age provided for the first data collection was used.

	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Area of interest	1.Pre-schoolers, early years and early childhood (children between 2 and 8 years of age) 2. Relevance to emotion regulation 3. Studies taking into account children's views	1. Older children (over the age of 8) and/or Adolescents 2. No relevance to emotion regulation 3. No relevance to EP practice (neuropathology or maladaptive functioning) 4. Specific focus on gender, ethnicity or other socio-economic

	4. A mixed sample of typically developing children	variables 5. Presence of SEN or psychopathology (child maltreatment, domestic violence)
Context	1. Studies were conducted on or after 1994 2. Written in English and full text available	1. Studies conducted before 1994 2. Not written in English and/or no full text available
Method of study	1. Quantitative and mixed methods studies 2. Qualitative studies Children self-report Children interviews Drawing or drawing and talking Story stem or vignettes used Visual methods Mosaic method	1. Quantitative studies where children's views were not elicited (data was collected through parental or teacher self-report questionnaires or through observations) 2. Based on personal opinion

Further sources: Prior knowledge of the subject was used to identify relevant books and articles. Additional records were identified through hand-searching of references in books, articles and dissertations.

Appendix 3: Ethical approval

NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION

For research involving human participants
BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates in Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology

SUPERVISOR: Mark Fox **REVIEWER: Maria Castro**

STUDENT: Mercedes Johnson

Title of proposed study: What do 4 year old children report adults can do to regulate their emotions, in particular: anxiety, anger and happiness?
Course: Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

DECISION *(Delete as necessary)***:**

***APPROVED**

APPROVED: Ethics approval for the above named research study has been granted from the date of approval (see end of this notice) to the date it is submitted for assessment/examination.

APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES (see Minor Amendments box below)**:** In this circumstance, re-submission of an ethics application is not required but the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made before the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box below when all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to her/his supervisor for their records. The supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records.

NOT APPROVED, MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED (see Major Amendments box below)**:** In this circumstance, a revised ethics application must be submitted and approved before any research takes place. The revised application will be reviewed by the same reviewer. If in doubt, students should ask their supervisor for support in revising their ethics application.

Minor amendments required *(for reviewer)*:

There are some ambiguities, for example: What do 4 year old children report adults can do to regulate their emotions, in particular: anxiety, anger and happiness? It is not altogether clear that this is about adults helping children with their emotions (it could be about adults regulating their own). It reads as s if in 30 minutes play sessions children will be presented around three emotional states: happiness, anger and anxiety, which would be overambitious, however, it is clear in the appendix 5 that it is one emotion per play session.
There are some minor errors (e.g. Method of recruitment: Invitation letters (see Appendix XX) and semi-structured interview (Appendix 6).

Major amendments required *(for reviewer):*

Confirmation of making the above minor amendments *(for students)*:

I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data.

Student's name *(Typed name to act as signature): Mercedes Johnson*
Student number: 1224730

Date: 28/06/15

ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO RESEACHER *(for reviewer)*

If the proposed research could expose the researcher to any of kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard? Please rate the degree of risk:

	HIGH
	MEDIUM
√	LOW

Reviewer comments in relation to researcher risk (if any):

Reviewer *(Typed name to act as signature)*: Maria Castro

Date: 14 June 2015

This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee (moderator of School ethics approvals)

PLEASE NOTE:
*For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's insurance and indemnity policy, prior ethics approval from the School of Psychology (acting on behalf of the UEL Research Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place.

*For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's insurance and indemnity policy, travel approval from UEL (not the School of Psychology) must be gained if a researcher intends to travel overseas to collect data, even if this involves the researcher travelling to his/her home country to conduct the research. Application details can be found here: http://www.uel.ac.uk/gradschool/ethics/fieldwork/

Appendix 4

Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

(Please read to children)

Dear _____

My name is Mercedes and I am a researcher from University of East London. I wonder if you would like to help me find out what young children believe that adults can do to help them feel better? Imagine when children feel worried about something, maybe going to a new place or meeting new people, what can adults around them do to make the children feel better? Or when children feel happy about something in their life, maybe a birthday party or a special trip, can adults help to keep that feeling of happiness going a bit longer?

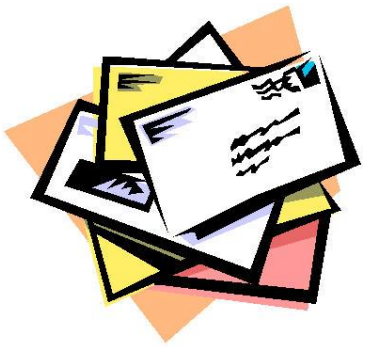
Over the next few weeks I will be coming to your school. Would you like to meet with me four times, about half an hour each time, and do some activities together? Someone that you know from your school will be there too. I will ask you to draw something and talk about your drawing. Then we will play with some toys – a family of animals. Then we will go

together around your school and ask you to take some photographs of things and places around the school that make you feel happy, angry or worried.

Every time we meet I will use a digital voice recorder to record our conversations. I will also use a camera to videotape some the time spent together on activities. I will also remind you of what we will be doing and ask you if you are still happy to talk to me. It is OK for you to say no at any point and I will not ask you any more questions.

I will keep all the video and voice recording of our meetings and store them safely on my computer. The computer has a password and no one else will know it but me. I will also safely keep your drawings and photographs you take but I will also give you copies for you to keep safe. Everything we do together will be used to write a report, a bit like a book, but I will not share your name with anyone else. This means that no one reading my report

will be able to tell that I was talking to you or that the drawings and pictures belong to you.



When the report is finished I will send you a letter to let you know what I have found by talking to children like you. Thank you for reading this invitation. Keep it somewhere safe but if you lose it I can give you another copy. If you have any questions please speak to me or someone at school. An adult you trust can help you with that.

If you are happy to talk to me in school then please read and sign the consent form.

Thank you,

_____

Mercedes Johnson

Doctoral Trainee Educational Psychologist

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

School of Psychology
Stratford Campus
Water Lane
London E15 4LZ

Researcher: Mercedes Johnson
Contact Details: u1224730@uel.ac.uk
07812 322 397

Consent to participate in a research study: What do young children report adults can do to regulate their emotions, in particular: anxiety, anger and happiness?

Please read out to children: I want to help Mercedes with her research and talk to her about how adults can help me and other children feel better. I am also OK to meet with Mercedes up to four times and do some fun activities that she will explain to me.

It is OK by me that:

- Mercedes will record our play activities and conversation. She will use both video and audio recorders.
- My name will not be show in any conversations, drawings and photographs.
- The videos and recordings, drawings and photographs will be kept safe by Mercedes.
- I can change my mind about helping Mercedes any time without any questions being asked.
- Mercedes might talk to someone responsible if she is worried about my safety and/or wellbeing.
- I will be given copies of my own drawings and photographs to keep.
- I will receive a letter that will explain what Mercedes has found out after talking to me and children like me.

My name _____

My signature or special mark _____

Today's date _____

Appendix 5

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

School of Psychology
Stratford Campus
Water Lane
London E15 4LZ

Researcher: Mercedes Johnson
Contact Details: u1224730@uel.ac.uk
07812 322 397

Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

Dear Parent / Carer,

I am a Doctoral Trainee Educational Psychologist on placement in the North Herts Educational Psychology Service. As part of my Professional Doctorate in Educational Psychology training at the University of East London I am carrying out a research project into *the role of adults in children's emotional regulation*. This letter tells you about this project and invites your child to take part if they are interested.

My research is called: What do young children report adults can do to regulate their emotions, in particular: anxiety, anger and happiness?

This means that I am interested to find out:

1. What do children report adults do to support their emotional regulation?
2. What methods do young children find helpful in allowing them to express their views on emotional regulation?

Gathering children's views as well as their emotional wellbeing are central to new legislation and guidance emerging from the Department of Education – Children's Act 2014 and the Special Needs Code of Practice 2015 are such examples. The big screen and the media have also taken the subject to heart and the most recent animated production – Inside Out – speaks metaphorically about such concepts: innate human emotions, internal working memories, emotion regulation and the role of experiences in shaping the future personality.

The research will be carried out at your child's school during school hours. I would be interested in meeting with your child about four times and carrying out a number of activities, on a one to one basis, such as:

- playing with a family of toy animals. Your child will be given three scenarios and ask to imagine what will happen next and show what each family member might do next. There is an online video about a similar type of activity and you could access it here: www.comunitycare.co.uk/2011/11/07/social-work-tools-for-direct-work-with-children-dolls/
- talking and drawing. Your child will be asked to think about a child just like them who feels happy / angry / anxious (worried) about something and to draw a picture of what

that child is doing / thinking. I will then ask your child to imagine what adults that look after that depicted child can do to make the child in the drawing feel better.

- taking photographs in school and talking about them. Your child will be asked to take photographs of things / places (but not other people) around the school that makes them feel happy / angry/ anxious. I will accompany them around the school during this activity. We will then look at the photographs and talk about them. I will then ask your child a number of questions. For example, if this [look at your child's photograph] makes you angry, what can the adults that look after you here do to make you feel better?

Sessions will be both video and audio recorded. Each meeting will last approximately half an hour in the presence of a staff member. Your child will be asked to give oral feedback about how they feel at the end of each session and how helpful it was for them.

This research will be written up as a thesis project as part of my doctorate in Educational Psychology at the University of East London. I want to assure you that all the information about your child' s views, collected during the course of the project, will remain confidential, and that the report will not contain any names or identifiable information about you or your child. All video & audio recordings will be transcribed and data will be anonymised. Information gathered will not be shared with any other participants or outside agencies unless obtained information suggests that someone might be at risk of a significant harm. I will not discuss anything your child tells me with people other than my supervisors for the purposes other than data analysis.

- When video & audio records are typed up and all the names will be replaced with pseudonyms.
- Video & audio records will be destroyed at the end of the project (August 2016). Typed up data will be destroyed three years after the project is completed (August 2019).
- All data will be stored on a password-protected computer. My research supervisors might have access to the typed up data to help me with data analysis. No one else will have access to these data.
- A letter summarising the main findings of the study will be sent to your child at the end of the study.

Your child's participation in all stages of this project is completely voluntary. If at any time your child wishes to withdraw from the study they can do so without needing to give a reason. Should your child withdraw after 18th December 2015 (end of term), the researcher reserves the right to use your child's anonymised data in the write-up of the study and any further analysis that may be conducted by the researcher.

If your child wishes to take part and you are happy for your child to do so, then please complete the attached parental consent form, and return it to the school office by ……. …. I would like to emphasise that agreeing to your child's participation in the research does not necessarily mean that your child will be involved in the study. I am aiming to collect data from a small sample of up to 8 children so it is not possible to include everyone that agrees to take part.

Please feel free to ask me any questions. Please retain this invitation letter for reference.

If you have any questions or concerns about how the study has been conducted, please contact the study's supervisor:

Dr Mark Fox; School of Psychology; University of East London; Water Lane; London E15 4LZ.
Tel: 020 8223 6396 Email address: m.d.fox@uel.ac.uk

Or

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee:
Dr. Mark Finn; School of Psychology; University of East London; Water Lane; London E15 4LZ.
Tel: 020 8223 4493 Email: m.finn@uel.ac.uk

Thank you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

_____

Mercedes Johnson

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

School of Psychology
Stratford Campus
Water Lane
London E15 4LZ

Researcher: Mercedes Johnson
Contact Details: u1224730@uel.ac.uk
07812 322 397

Consent to participate in a research study: What do young children report adults can do to regulate their emotions, in particular: anxiety, anger and happiness?

I have the read the information sheet about the research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about it. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which my child will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researchers involved in the study will have access to identifying data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent for my child to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that my child has the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to him or herself and without being obliged to give any reason. I also understand that should my child withdraw later than 18th December 2015 (end of term) the researcher reserves the right to use my child's anonymous data in the write-up of the study and in any further analysis that may be conducted by the researcher.

PARENT PERMISSION

If you give your consent that your son/daughter _____ may participate in this study, ***please sign and date below***. You will receive a copy of this form to keep for future reference.

_____ _____

Parent/Guardian's Name (*Block Capitals*) Date

_____ _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature Date

[***If both parents are required to sign, add second set of signature and date lines here.***]

_____	_____
Parent/Guardian's Name (*Block Capitals*)	Date
_____	_____
Parent/Guardian's Signature	Date
Mercedes Johnson _____	_____
Researcher's Name (*Block Capitals*)	Date
_____	_____
Researcher's Signature	Date

Appendix 6: Draw and Talk scenarios:

1. [Happy scenario]: Imagine a child just like you, whose birthday is today. Draw what that child is doing and thinking about. Further prompts: How is the child feeling? Who is around; any grown-ups? What can they do to make this child feeling like this for a bit longer?

2. [Anxious scenario]: Imagine a child just like you who is starting a new school today. Draw what that child is doing and thinking about. . Further prompts: How is the child feeling? Who is around; any grown-ups? What can they do to make this child feeling a bit better?

3. [Angry scenario]: Imagine a child just like you who has his/her favourite toy taken away by someone else. Draw what the child is doing and thinking about. Further prompts: How is the child feeling? Who is around; any grown-ups? What can they do to make this child feeling a bit better?

Appendix 7: Cat family play scenarios inspired by vignettes

1. [Happy]: It's little boy/girl cat birthday (depending on the participant's gender the little child cat figurine is placed on the table). Mummy cat and daddy cat are bringing in the cake (both mother and father cat figurine together with a pretend birthday cake are placed on the table). Grandma cat and granddad cat are coming to visit (both grandma and granddad cat are placed on the table). Show me what happens next [pause and allow the child to think and enact with the toy animals]. Further prompts: How is little boy / girl cat feeling? What can the grown up cats do to make little cat feel like this for a bit longer?

2. [Anxious]: It's little boy/girl cat first day at school (depending on the participant's gender the little child cat figurine is placed on the table). Mummy cat and daddy cat are helping him / her to get ready (both mother and father cat figurine are placed on the table). Suddenly little boy / girl cat starts crying and says that he / she doesn't want to go to school. Show me what happens next [pause and allow the child to think and enact with the toy animals]. How is little boy / girl cat feeling? What can Mummy cat / Daddy cat do to make little boy / girl cat feel better again?

3. [Angry]: Little girl / boy cat is arguing over a toy with another little cat whilst playing at nursery (depending on the participant's gender the little child cat figurine is placed on the table together with another little cat figurine and a small toy). There are two grownup cats in the room (place two adult cat figurines on the table). Show me what happens next [pause and allow the child to think and enact with the toy animals]. How is little boy / girl cat feeling? What can the grownup cats do to make little boy / girl cat feel better again?

Appendix 8: Semi-structured interview

1. What was it like for you to do the [drawing, playing with the cat family, taking photos] activity with me?

2. What did you find most helpful? In what way was it helpful?

3. Was there something that you did not enjoy about the activity today? Can you tell me more, please?

4. Think about the last time you were with me. Which activity was better for you: drawing, playing with toy animals or taking photos? Why did you choose that one out of all?

Appendix 9: Data collected for each child participant in the research study

Name (Pseudonym)	Age at data collection	Draw and Talk	Play scenario	Photo activity
Cherry	3 years 5 months	16:11 min video recording 15:43 min audio recording 3 drawings	33:42 min video recording 35:07 min audio recording	10:22 min audio recording 22 photos
Daisy	3 years 7 months	18:10 min video recording 17:47 min audio recording 3 drawings	15:29 min video recording 15:24 min audio recording	16:49 min audio recording 41 photos
Jasmine	4 years 1 month	35:21 min video recording 34:44 min audio recording 3 drawings	33:50 min video recording 33:42 min audio recording	14:37 min audio recording 25 photos
Leon	3 years 10 months	16:31 min video recording 19:37 min audio recording 1 drawing	19:20 video recording 19:31 min audio recording	9:51 min audio recording 9 photos
Max	3 years 10 months	21:24 min video recording 21:01 min audio recording 3 drawings	20:19 min video recording 20:29 min audio recording	15:59 min audio recording 36 photos
Rose	4 years 1 month	25:44 min video recording 26:01 min audio recording 3 drawings	20:09 min video recording 20:35 min audio recording	19:46 min audio recording 14 photos

Appendix 10: Codebook for key themes for first research question

4.1.1 The context does not define the feelings

- A child can feel anything on their birthday (p. 1 – 2 draw and talk transcript, Cherry)
- Children feel okay on their first day at school (p.3 draw and talk transcript, Cherry)
- The little girl can feel okay and sad when another child takes her toy away (draw and talk transcript, Cherry)
- Child is feeling fine then sad on her birthday (p.1 draw and talk transcript, Daisy)
- Child is scared on their birthday (p.1 Daisy, draw and talk transcript)
- Imaginary girl is happy on her first day at school (p.4 Daisy, draw and talk transcript)
- Children can be excited, happy and a bit worried on their first day at school (p.6 Rose, draw and talk transcript)

4.1.2 Feelings may be connected to physical symptoms

- A child can feel not sure on their first day at school; head may be hurting (p.3 Cherry draw and talk transcript) – awareness of somatic sensations during uncomfortable feelings
- Mummy helps the little girl by bringing the telescope (stethoscope), the little girl has a tummy ache (p.5 transcript Cherry, draw and talk)
- Gingerbread man is the little girl's favourite toy (p.7 Daisy, draw and talk transcript)
- To prevent this toy being taken away she will eat it herself (p.7 Daisy, draw and talk transcript)
- Adults will eat the teeth of the child who takes the toy gingerbread man away (p.7)
- Teeth fall out and get broken (p.7, Daisy, draw and talk transcript) – unpleasant consequences for bad behaviour. Physical replacement of lost object and further physical punishment; further unpleasant consequences for the offending child. Impulsive behaviour is not

tolerated by the grown-ups Daisy knows, clear negative consequences for such behaviour.

- Feeling tired does not help when experiencing new things (p. 5 Jasmine, draw and talk transcript) – awareness of own baseline when entering a new situation.
- Little boy cat is crying whilst getting ready for his first day at school because he is poorly (Leon, p. 5, cat family transcription)

4.1.3 Distraction helps a child when upset

- A birthday party will stop the child crying (p.2 draw and talk transcript, Cherry) – distraction from adults?
- Having a toy helps the child feel Okay on her birthday party (p.2 draw and talk transcript Cherry) – child engages in own distraction from uncomfortable feelings
- Adults can offer diversion (computer game) or retrieve the lost toy for the little girl (p.5 draw and talk transcript Cherry) – diversion technique
- More food and cake will make the little girl feel better on her birthday (p.3 Daisy draw and talk transcript)
- Other option is to hide the toy away (p.7 Daisy draw and talk transcript) – avoidance strategies
- Important having mum and dad together doing things with her when unsure about surroundings (p. 4 – 5 Jasmine draw and talk transcript) – distraction technique
- Mum distracts her by engaging in a new activity, picking leaves (p.6 Jasmine draw and talk transcript) – distraction
- Adults distract the child from feeling sad by giving her cake when someone takes the toy away (p.7 Jasmine draw and tall transcript) – adults distract
- Distraction by giving an identical toy to play with, Jasmine is drawing another train in addition to the one taken away from Linda, the imaginary child (p.8 Jasmine draw and talk transcript) – distraction by replacing lost object with a similar one
- Grown-ups pull funny faces at children to make them feel happy when their toy is taken away or when they start school (p.4 Leon draw and talk transcript) - doing funny things with adults help children feel better (p.4)

- Grown-ups painted with the younger brother and that helped (p.3 Max draw and talk transcript) – diversion techniques and doing fun things with children to help them feel better.
- Bouncing on a trampoline and having a new dress bought helps when starting school (p.7 Rose draw and talk transcript)
- Each little cat character having their own toy would stop the fighting (p.6 – 7, Leon cat family transcript)

4.1.4 Adult engagement helps

- Adults doing activities with the child helps making her feel okay (p.2 draw and talk transcript Cherry)
- Adults engaging in fun activities with other children at the party helps (p.3 draw and talk transcript Cherry)
- When all the fun with adults centres around the birthday child it helps (p.3 draw and talk transcript Cherry)
- Mum takes the child to school (p.3 draw and talk transcript Cherry)
- All of the little girl's family will help her on her birthday (p.2 draw and talk transcript Daisy)
- Grown-ups kill the monster (p.3 draw and talk transcript Daisy) – adults remove the object / situation causing uncomfortable feelings
- Adults will use face painting to make the little girl better on her birthday (p.3 draw and talk transcript Daisy)
- The painting on the little girl's face will be a monster (p3 draw and talk transcript Daisy)
- The adults will put bones on the little girl (p.3 draw and talk transcript Daisy)
- The little girl can now scare other people (p.3 draw and talk transcript Daisy) – with the help of adults children can master own feelings and apply that mastery when dealing with new situations
- Younger brother felt sad and cried when he went to a new preschool (p.2 Max draw and talk transcript) – it is helpful to think of experiences of others you know
- Mum took younger brother to school in her car (p.3 Max draw and talk transcript) – having primary carers with you for new beginnings helps

- Grown-ups at preschool helped younger brother to eat his lunch (p.3 Max draw and talk transcript)
- Teacher brings out a special birthday cake when it's someone's birthday at nursery (p1 – 2 Rose draw and talk transcript)
- Adults pull happy funny faces to make children happy on their birthday (p.2 Rose draw and talk transcript)
- Having special things on the birthday cake makes the child happy (p.2 Rose draw and talk transcript)
- Having stories and playing helped her younger sibling at the new school (p.8 Rose draw and talk transcript)
- Adults in nursery look after her younger sibling because he is small (p.8 Rose draw and talk transcript) – adults provide care and safe base for young children in nursery
- Mum comforts younger sibling by putting him in a pushchair when he is crying (p.8 Rose draw and talk transcript)
- Mum has tickled her younger sibling to make him feel better (p.9 Rose draw and talk transcript)
- Mum and dad take turn in getting her ready for school (p.6 Rose draw and talk transcript)
- Hello Kitty gets presents from her parents on her birthday. That makes her happy (p.4 Rose draw and talk transcript)
- Mummy and daddy need to make Hello Kitty excited on her birthday (p.4 draw and talk transcript Rose)
- Rose got a bike for her birthday. It was bought by her grandmother and she was helped by the grandfather (p.4 – 5 Rose draw and talk transcript) – adults buying exciting presents / adults helping each other to make the birthday more special for the child
- Going to the zoo with her family makes her feel good (p.5 Rose draw and talk transcript)
- Making a birthday cake and decorating it keeps little boy cat happy on his birthday (p.4-5 Leon cat family transcript)

4.1.5 Adults can help children overcome the physical symptoms associated with feelings

- Mummy can help the little girl feel better, mummy is a doctor (p. 4 draw and talk transcript Cherry)
- The snail and the whale characters come into her story (p.4 draw and talk transcript Cherry) – adult reading stories to children make them feel better / just like in the story someone big can help someone small and in return something small can help someone big?
- Mummy doctor is bumping the head of the little girl but that is no good so the yellow telescope (stethoscope?) is going to make the little girl feel better (p.4 draw and talk transcript Cherry) – although siblings can help when feeling not sure, it's the adult who can truly help

4.1.6 Adults delivering justice helps resolve feelings

- Adults will take all the toys away from the child who takes it (p.6 draw and talk transcript Daisy)
- Adults will physically punish the child who takes the toy away (p.6 draw and talk transcript Daisy)
- Adults can help by taking the gingerbread man out of the other child's mouth (p.7 draw and talk transcript Daisy)
- Adults deliver justice and resolve feelings of sadness, they retrieve the toy back (p. 7 Jasmine draw and talk transcript) – adults are good at providing comfort
- Any adult in nursery (not just your key worker) can help the little girl feel better when her toy is taken away (p.5 draw and talk transcript Cherry)

4.1.7 Close adult presence helps

- Having cousins and grandparents on her birthday helped her feeling happy for longer on her birthday (p.3 Jasmine draw and talk transcript) – closeness of family
- Having same gender parent comforting you is helpful when you experience new situations, the imaginary boy waiting with his dad for the train (p. 9 – 10 Jasmine draw and talk transcript) – same gender parent best at comforting when anxious

- Having both parents together with you is important when experiencing new things, the boy is fine going to a new school, he has both his dad and mum taking him (p. 10 of Jasmine draw and talk transcript) – having both parents with you is comforting and distracting from difficult feelings
- Having mum and dad and sibling on the day makes the child feel happy (p.1 Max draw and talk transcript)
- Having grandparents on the birthday makes Max happy (p.2 Max draw and talk transcript)
- Younger brother wanted mummy (p.2 Max draw and talk transcript) – carer provides a safe base
- Younger brother was happy when back at home (p.2 draw and talk transcript Max)

4.1.8 Being touched and comforted by adults helps

- Jasmine decides the boy she was drawing was a passenger going to a new school by train (Jasmine, draw and talk transcript, p.9)
- Little boy feels fine about his first day at school (Jasmine, draw and talk transcript p.10)
- Daddy holds hands with the little boy (Jasmine, draw and talk transcript p.10)
- Daddy and mummy wait with the little boy (Jasmine, draw and talk transcript, p.10)
- Little girl cat dances and then has a fall / bump. Mummy cat is making her happy (Cherry, play with the cats transcript, p.5)
- Mummy cat is kissing little girl cat on the head and face (Cherry, play with the cats transcript p.5)
- Mummy cat is hugging little girl cat (Cherry, play with the cats transcript p.5)
- Grown-ups are helping little girl cat feel less sad on her first day at school (Jasmine, cat play transcript, p.7)
- Little girl cat goes back to have her nap and her cat parents will sleep either side (Jasmine, cat play transcript, p.7)
- Mummy cat and daddy cat lay very close to little girl cat (Jasmine, cat play transcript, p.7)

- All the cat family gathering around little girl cat (Jasmine, cat play transcript, p.8)

4.1.9 Adults providing transitional objects helps

- Little girl cat needs her baby toy cat in the car on the way to school for her first day (p. 7 Cherry cat family transcript)
- Rose, the little girl cat, needs the adults to bring her all her toys at nursery so that she can play with them and feel better after crying getting ready for her first day (p. 5 – 6, Jasmine cat play transcript)

4.1.10 Child engagement helps

- Other children helping the child (p.3 draw and talk transcript Cherry) – comfort from significant others but not adults
- Sister is close to the little girl because her forehead is hurting (p.3 Cherry draw and talk transcript) – comfort from significant others but not adults
- Max gave younger brother one of his toys and younger brother loved it (p.3 – 4 draw and talk Max transcript) – helping to soothe others in distress
- Little boy cat needs a girl robot for his birthday (p.2. Leon cat family transcript)

4.1.11 Adults are not always helpful

- Adults can upset (make her sad) the little girl by taking her toy away so that she can't reach it. Adults take the toy to give it to someone else (perhaps sharing?) (p.5 & 6 draw and talk transcript Cherry)
- Not all adults are successful at distracting, dad is using a work book but that doesn't make her happy (p.6 Jasmine draw and talk transcript) – dad is not always good at distracting her from feelings of anxiety / same gender adult better at distracting (comforting) when anxiety is experienced
- Younger brother cried when mummy took his toys away to give to charity (p.3 Max draw and talk transcript)
- Key worker wasn't there on her first day at school + key worker wasn't present on her recent trip to the zoo (p.6 Rose draw and talk transcript) – key adult not always present

- The grown-up pulls Leon by his legs and chucks him down (p.2 draw and talk transcript Leon) - the game is a bit rough for Leon (he gets pulled down) but he doesn't mind (because he doesn't hurt himself)
- Leon is not happy with the game, Leon wants to get down by himself (p.2 draw and talk transcript Leon) – sometimes adults lead in the wrong direction

4.1.12 Sometimes children deal with the emotions on their own

- No one is there to help the little girl (p.1 Daisy draw and talk transcript) – feelings of helplessness
- The little girl is alone on her first day at school (p.4 Daisy draw and talk transcript)
- No grown-ups and no children at the new school (p.4 Daisy draw and talk transcript)
- Little girl does nothing at the new school (p.5 Daisy draw and talk transcript)
- Little girl wants to return home (p.5 Daisy draw and talk transcript) – home as a secure base nobody can help and nothing is interesting at the new school
- Nobody picks the little girl up from school (p.5 Daisy draw and talk transcript)
- Little girl gets home by herself; rides the scooter by herself on the main road with the cars (p.5 Daisy draw and talk transcript) – the child finds resolution independently but the journey is quite challenging
- The little girl is sad at her new school; nobody can help (p.5 draw and talk transcript Daisy) – new beginnings can be a disappointing experience is you do not have a secure base
- The little girl takes her own toy back (p.6 draw and talk transcript Daisy) – self regulation
- The little girl is happy with the outcome (p.6 Daisy draw and talk transcript) – self-regulation provides satisfaction
- The little girl was sad when her toy was taken away (p.6 draw and talk transcript Daisy)
- No grown-ups can help (p.6 draw and talk transcript Daisy)

- S will just help herself by pulling funny faces (p.4 Leon draw and talk transcript) – self soothing
- Nothing can comfort younger brother once he's at the preschool (p.3 Max draw and talk transcript).

Spare – codes: interesting but irrelevant information

4.1. Jasmine – codes and candidate themes

- Not all children fight over their toys, no fight happens on her train (p.8 transcript) – some children do not externalise anger

4.1 Leon – codes and candidate themes

- Children feel happy on their birthday (p.1 transcript)
- Children bring sweets on their birthday to share at nursery (p.1)
- Leon is on a rocket with the birthday child (p.1)
- A female grown-up is with the two children on the rocket (p.1)
- The grown-up goes outside and plays with Leon (p. 1-2 transcript)
- Leon loves pretending, he thinks it's cool (p.2 transcript)
- S will feel scared if someone else takes her toy hand away (p.3 transcript)
- S also feels sad when someone else takes her toy away (p.3 transcript)
- Children do loads of stuff at school (p.4 transcript)
- Children feel happy on their first day at school (p.4)

4.1 Max – codes and candidate themes

- Having a special birthday cake makes the child happy on their birthday (p.1 transcript)
- The child is happy on his birthday (p.1)
- Younger brother didn't want to eat his lunch at first but one day he did (p.3)
- Younger brother doesn't want Max to hold his lead (p.4) - Max is aware that younger brother needs to be kept safe

4.1 Rose – codes and candidate themes

- Rose thinks the red face on the fan is grumpy (p.1 transcript)

- Children are excited on their birthdays at nursey (p.2 transcript) – adults at nursery make the birthday a special day for the children
- Rose brings Hello Kitty into the conversation (p.3 transcript)
- Drawing different things at nursery: ghosties then Hello Kitty (p.3)
- Having chocolate bars makes Hello Kitty happy on her fourth birthday (p. 4 transcript); Hello Kitty's mummy and daddy go to work (p.4)
- Rose felt excited on her first day at school (p.6)
- Rose does fun stuff with her mummy (like going to the farm) but when her younger sibling misbehaves they all stop going (p.6)

Appendix 11: Example of transcript

Talk and draw video transcription – Cherry – total length of video recording: 16:11 minutes

Time	Audio transcription	Verbal transcription
02:16	Researcher: who is there with her (imaginary child)?	
	Cherry: [pause]	Cherry: looking at Researcher but continuing to draw
	R: … on her birthday?	
	C: [pause]	C: continuing to draw
	R: does she have a name... this girl?	
	C: yeah	
	R: what's her name?	C: playing with her pencil
	C: mmm [pause]	
	R: we can just pretend… make up a name	
	Key worker: what do you want to call her?	
	C: errr	C: still playing with her pencil
	Key worker: what's a nice name?	
	C: hum	
	Key worker: your choice	
	C: hmm… she might... I think it's A… I think it might be A at the party…	
	R: wow, A…	
	C: she is in X group at the nursery	C: continues to play with her pencil
	R: so this girl is called A?	
	C: yeah	

R: who's there on her birthday?	
C: hum…I think it must be… AA…	
R: AA…OK… is that a big girl, a grown-up?	C: continues to play with her pencil
C: [pause] huh huh	
R: a grown-up?	
C: [pause]	C: shaking her head no-no
R: yeah… OK… and who else is there?	C: this time nods affirmatively
C: H too…	
R: H too?... is that a grown up or a child?	C: continues to play with her pencil
C: a grown-up	
R: a grown-up… OK… and… who else is there?	
C: B…	
R: B…all right… is that a grown-up or a child?	C: looks at R
C: a child	
R: a child… OK…and how is this little girl feeling on her birthday?	
C: [pause]	
R: is she happy, is she sad, is she worried… is she angry?	
C: [pause]	
R: is she excited?	
C: yeah	
R: which one is it?	C: looking at R and rubbing the pencil
C: any	
R: any of them?	

	C: [pause]	
	R: OK…do you want to pick one to start with?... how is she feeling?	
	C: OK, I think	C: nods affirmatively
	R: OK, she's feeling OK…	
	C: yeah	
	R: OK … that's a good answer…	
	C: she's … she's just crying…	
	R: oh… she's crying?... oh…	
	C: yeah… she's… she… she… she was crying in X group and now she's crying in Y group…	C: shows tears down her face
	R: oh dear…and is she crying on her birthday as well?	
	C: yeah… but she's … she's OK when she goes to her party…	
	R: oh, she's OK when she goes to her party…that's right… OK… and what…	
	C: she… she's got her tiger….	
	R: she's hot her tiger….	
	C: and it's stripy…	
	R: it's stripy…does that help her be happy or OK for her party?	C: shows whiskers and stripes on her face and smiles
	C: OK for the party…	
05:05		C: shows stripes on her shoulders
05:20	R: […] what do these grown-up do to make… A feel ha…OK on her birthday party? What do they do?	

C:[pause]… they roll the balls for her… roll	
R: they roll the balls for her?	C: shows how to roll the balls away from her
C: and they'll go round D… roll… round… round…	
R: great… what else do they do to make her feel OK?	C: rolls her arms over and over again
C: they go fast and fast and fast and fast…	
R: they go fast with the balls?	
C: [pause]… really, really fast	C: rolls her arms again
R: really, really fast… and what else do they do?	
C: they go behind her… boo	C: continues to roll her arms fast
R: they go behind her, yeah…	
C: they fall to the floor poof	
R: they fall to the floor, is that because they're playing some games?	C: stretches her arms behind
C: [pause]	
R: ah right.. so these grown-ups play some games… OK… what else can they do?	
C: they can… try and roll around by the balls…	C: nods affirmatively and smiles
R: so they still play with this ball… OK… do they do anything else other than games?	
C: [pause] grown-ups throw the boys up in the air	C: resumes rolling her arms around each other
R: grown-ups throw the boys up in the air…	
C: and they land on C [herself]	

	lap…	C: throws her arms up in the air
06:47		
07:22	R: now, C, imagine a little girl just like you who is starting school today […]	
	C: I think it's E that's starting school…	C: stops drawing and looks at R
	R: it's E that's starting school… how does E feel?	
	C: she feels OK	C: continues to draw
	R: she feels OK…right…and who's taking her to school?	
	C: hum… me…	
	R: oh, you are taking E to school… OK…are there any grown-ups with E as well?	
	C: no	
	R: no?	C: continues to draw
	C: me and E are childs	
	R: yeah, you are children but are there grown-ups taking E to school… I don't know like mummy... daddy… grandma... grandpa… errr…aunty.. an uncle…. A friend?	
	C: errm… E's mummy…	
	R: E's mummy… OK…	
	C: and I've got my mummy called X…	C: stops drawing and looks at R
	R: OK… but does E's mummy…	

OK, let's go back to E… does she ever feel worried about coming to school?	
C: [pause] ermm	
R: you know… like she's not sure…	
C: I think she does…	C: resumes drawing
R: you know… like she's not sure about it…because she doesn't know anybody..	
C: I think she does…	
R: she does…	
C: and she's got a forehead like that…	
R: OK …	C: continues to draw
C: and her forehead is hurting…she's got clapping feet… at the end of her toes	
R: OK… now…	
C: her boy's go round and round on her toe… it's hurting her forehead… there…	C: stops drawing and points to the middle of her forehead
R: oh right… so someone is going on her toe and it's hurting her forehead…	
C: and… this is… this is her sister… with only… that and that and that… because she is not feeling very well…	C: resumes drawing
R: oh, why is she not feeling very well?	
C: because she's got a sore forehead… and this is her mummy…	C: continues to draw and add detail
R: OK… so what can mummy do to	

	help her feel better?	
	C: she's a doctor because… that's a whale…	C: point to her drawing
	R: OK…	
	C: with a snail on it tail…	
	R:OK , is mummy and a whale in the same time?	
	C: [pause] and this is his back…	
	R: OK … let's go back to E who is not feeling very well… can any grown-ups do anything to make her feel any better?	C: continues to draw and add detail
	C: [pause] that is a snail…	
	R: a snail…	
	C: [pause] and mummy's gonna come… that's a small face…	
10:24	R: it is a small face indeed…but that's OK…	C:adds new detail to her drawing
10:49	R: […] and how is mummy helping E feel better?	
	C: she's going to bump E on the head…	C: stops drawing and places her hand on her crown
	R: oh… she's going to bump her on the head?... to make her feel better?	C: continues to draw
	C: [pause] no… that's goin' to hurt her head…	
	R: that's going to hurt her head, that's right…	
	C: and this is the ticks… for	C: adds more detail to her

	mummy's mouth…	drawing
	R: but how is E's mummy going to make E feel better then?	
	C: but she… is going to be this half…	
	R: OK	C: swaps yellow for peach crayon
	C: it's going to be the half of the pink and the yellow… so the yellow is going to make her feel better… and that's going to be the telescope… so this big telescope… it's going to be the yellow telescope going round and round…	C: puts the peach crayon back and picks up the yellow one again, points to details on her drawing
	R: OK	
	C: and this small telescope is going to be the round and round one… pass that sister… goes round… that… and then… poof… the fountain crayon… this crayon that I'm gonna use for the cheecks…	C: points to details on her drawing and scribbles with yellow then pokes the paper with the crayon. Reaches for the peach crayon again.
12:10	R: the cheecks…you're going to use peach… that's great	
12:35	R: […] now Cherry, can you imagine a little girl just like you who is playing with her favourite toy and someone else takes it away.	
	C: E is playing with a toy and M takes it off her	C: looks at her peach crayon
	R: how is E feeling?	
	C: she's feeling OK … she's got two eyes.. two cheeks…	
	R: but she was playing with her favourite toy and someone takes it away without asking, how is she feeling about that?	C: explains details from her picture

C: she was sad

R: she was sad… OK…

C: look, there's her sad face…

R: it's a sad face…and can she feel anything else other than sad?

C: mummy

C: adds detail to her drawing

R: can someone help her

C: [interrupts] yes

R: … to feel better

C: continues to draw

C: M helped her … in the other room

C: stops drawing and looks at R

R: is there a grown-up that can help her?

C: yes… M said he would help her…

R: OK

C: and I'm going to back to the computer and help him…

R: OK and how is… how is this grow-n up going to help E stop feeling sad, because someone has taken her toy?

C: hum…

R: what can they do?

C: I think they can give the toy back to them

C: resumes drawing briefly

R: they can give the toy back to them… OK… that' s a good idea

C: yep

R: can they do anything else to make her feel better?

C: they take her toy away again

and they put it behind her… so she can't get it and that's sad…	
R: that's sad… OK… but we don't want her to feel sad, we want her to feel better…	
C: yeah… but her mummy's come…	
R: her mummy? How can mummy help her feel a bit better?	
C: and this telescope is going to make her feel better….	
R: the telescope is going to make her feel better. How?	
C: and is going to make her tummy feel better… the yellow is going to help her…	
	C: pokes her paper with the crayon
R: the yellow is going to help her? Yellow was a helpful colour last time, I remember yellow was helping E last time. OK. How is yellow helping?	
C: this forehead is hurting… that… that spiral…	
	C: puts down her crayon and reaches for the yellow one again
R [to key worker]: there's s common theme here, the forehead hurting and yellow being helpful… I like it…	
C: and… of getting all this colouring…and she's getting all crying… somebody let her toy away	
	C: resumes drawing with the peach crayon
R: yeah…	
C: and look, she's sad in the picture	
R: she is sad in the picture indeed… lots of tears… can the teachers help her?	
	C: adds more details to and fro

C: hmm… I think I hear somebody outside…look…	with her crayon
OK: do you want to go and see what they're doing?	
C: yeah…	C: picks up her drawing and shows it to R
	C: adds more detail to her drawing

Appendix 12: CD with transcripts and other data